

SPED NEWS

Staff Edition



April 2002

John Enloe, Director
Special Education
Sevier County Schools
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Your Child and Health

by Dr. Cecil Blankenship, ETSU

Good health plays a vital part in our lives. People who are healthy tend to have more energy, are more successful in accomplishing tasks, and have greater enjoyment in life. Good health however is not altogether a matter of good luck or good genes. Health habits we practice as adults are often the habits we acquired as children. Parents and teachers of special education students should realize the importance of teaching and encouraging the practice of good healthy lifestyles as a means of establishing lifelong health. These habits should begin as early as possible in life and should constantly be reinforced throughout adolescence and young adulthood. The lifestyles we practice as adults tend to reflect the lifestyles we acquired as children and adolescents. When children and adolescents learn healthy habits they reduce the chance of disease and sickness.

A wonderful gift all parents and teachers can give to children is that of good health habits. It is not costly, but it reaps tremendous benefits for

Directors MEMO

A Process for Making Changes in the General Education Curriculum

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) places a strong emphasis on teaching the general education curriculum to students with disabilities and including them in state and local assessments for accountability purposes. This educational paradigm attempts to maximize participation of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum and to ensure that they acquire the skills necessary to lead independent and productive lives once they graduate from high school.

Most classroom teachers continuously adapt their lessons to address the variety of student learning styles and needs. This paper uses examples to describe a process that teachers can follow to educate students with disabilities using general education academic standards as their reference. Both special and general education teachers collaborate when teaching the general education curriculum to students with disabilities. In many instances, they find it necessary to adapt the general education curriculum. The accommodations and modifications suggested in this paper can be used with students who have disabilities in a variety of settings e.g., general education classrooms, resource special education programs, instructional special education programs. Most of these adaptations represent best instructional practices that teachers can apply to enhance learning for all students.

Standards Based Instruction

The first step teachers must take to implement standards based instruction is to become familiar with Tennessee and Sevier County Board of Education goals and objectives. Classroom teachers must then select lessons that address the state goals and county goals and objectives for the largest group of similar learners in their classrooms. Having identified these lessons, the teacher must decide how students with disabilities can participate in them successfully. The following questions should be considered:

Are the instructional demands of the lesson appropriate to the student's present levels of educational performance and learning characteristics?

Can all of the curriculum framework statements in the state or county guides for each goal be taught to students with disabilities or must some be adapted?

Making Accommodations and Modifications

Some students with disabilities may be able to participate in activities designed to meet the curriculum framework statements. In other cases, minimal adaptations might be needed to enable students to meet the standards. In order to determine appropriate accommodations and modifications, the teacher must consider the strengths and needs of students with disabilities, including:

- Areas in which the students show strength
- Potential problem areas for participating students
- Areas in which students need very little assistance
- Areas in which students need substantial support
- Ways in which the individual student learns best

When planning minor or significant changes, the teacher may start by considering instructional strategies that have proven to be effective in teaching students with diverse learning needs. The following questions might be helpful:

- Should the presentation of the teaching material include use of visual, auditory, tactile, and/or kinesthetic modalities (multisensory approach)?
- Should the instructional grouping be changed to create co-operative groupings, peer partners, or cross-age tutors?
- Should the unit be developed as an integrated curriculum?
- Can the lesson be connected to the students' personal and cultural experiences?
- Can the lesson be presented using thematic



Next Inservice

April 16th, TLC, 3:45-5:45

End of Year Meetings:

Planning and Writing
Appropriate IEP's for the
Following Year
Alana Owens and
Ruth McManus

Memo continued

units, semantic webs, venn diagrams, or other means of connecting and illustrating concepts?

-Should the lesson be presented as an interactive experience involving the student's active participation, e.g., a reciprocal teaching interaction?

If accommodations or modifications are needed, the teacher will have to consider what kinds of changes must be made. Least intrusive adaptations (minor changes) should be considered first. Teachers might ask these questions:

- Are changes needed in the format and length of the lesson?
- Must adjustments be made in the time for completing the lesson?
- Should the level of difficulty be adjusted?
- Should the classroom be arranged to meet specific student needs, such as preferential seating, study carrels, or other physical arrangements to reduce distractions?
- What additional support is needed for the student? Support can involve peer tutoring, paraprofessional assistance, and assistance by other teachers or ancillary staff.
- What methods will be used for motivation and reinforcement?
- Can assignments be adapted, or should alternative assignments be made in order to allow a student to participate successfully?
- Should the teacher or teacher assistant preview and review the lesson for a student requiring additional support?

More intrusive adaptations (major changes) might be required for students with significant disabilities. With these students, teachers might use the general education curriculum, adapting it to promote functional life skills. Modified or alternative standards in areas such as career/vocational or functional community skills might be needed for some students with significant disabilities.

The teacher should ask the following questions when selecting and/or modifying standards of the general education curriculum for students with significant disabilities:

- Is the content of the standard relevant to the knowledge and skills the student needs for current and future daily living and community adjustment?
- If an alternative standard is selected, does it set high expectations for the student?
- Have parents participated in selecting content standards that relate to the student's post school outcomes?

The teacher must decide what materials are best suited for students with disabilities. Some considerations might be:

- Textbooks covering the same content but at a lower degree of reading difficulty
- Use of manipulatives to demonstrate content
- Use of advance organizers to facilitate reading comprehension
- Use of computer-based instruction or assistive technology

When deciding on the most appropriate adaptations, teachers have a wide range of options based on students' learning and behavioral needs.

Assessment

An important aspect of the process of standards-based instruction is assessment. Teachers must know how to determine if students have mastered the content set forth in the standards. A few preliminary questions might help in the selection of appropriate assessment tools:

- Can the same assessment procedures be used for students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers?
- Should minor changes be made in assessment procedures to accommodate the individual needs of students with disabilities, such as oral responses, time extension, or reduced number of items?
- Are alternative assessments necessary for students with disabilities who are unable to participate in the regular assessment process, even with accommodations? Performance-based assessments, (e.g., demonstrations, projects, and illustrations), are alternative ways of assessing mastery.

There is no one correct approach to adapting curriculum for the needs of children with disabilities. The single most important fact to remember is that programs of learning must be individualized, and the IEP Team has complete control over the adaptations and modifications made to any course or curriculum. Grades in adapted or modified courses should reflect the student's performance with his or her individual modifications and should be recorded as such.

Blankenship continued

the child's entire life. Remember children who are healthy feel better, perform better and attain greater enjoyment in life. Give them a gift that will last a lifetime!

New Staff Summer Moore

2001 was a full year for Summer Moore. She graduated from Carson-Newman in May, married in July and began with Sevier County Schools in August. Summer teaches 6, 7, 8th grade resource English at Sevierville Middle School. She and her husband Jeff live in Talbott, TN with two dogs and one cat. In her time "off" she enjoys reading and spending time with her family.

Barbara Maffei

Barbara is the new Resource teacher at Seymour Primary School. She was raised near New York City but fell in love with Tenn. about 10 years ago. She moved here in June with her son Evan. Her 6 year old daughter continues to live in New York. Barbara earned a B.S. in psychology from Mercy College and her MS in Special Education from Long Island University. Her hobbies include hiking, swimming, ice skating, watching the sunrises and sunsets along with reading Mary Higgins Clark.

David Gorman

David teaches Resource teacher at Sevier County High in addition to his responsibilities as Head coach of the boys Basketball and the Tennis teams. Before moving to Sevier County he taught three years in Massachusetts and prior to that Baltimore City Schools.

"Kindness is the language
in which the deaf can hear
and the blind can see."
— Author Unknown

IMC

Theresa McCroskey wants to remind teachers to call her if you give anyone a material or test that is checked out to you. She will check it in from you and out to the other person. This will help us find materials when they are needed. Then when you ask for something, she will be able to find it

Newsletter

Contributions for the newsletter can be submitted to Nancy Wohl by email [nwohl@yahoo.com] no later than the first Friday of the month.