

SPED NEWS

Staff Edition



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John Enloe, Director
Special Education
Sevier County Schools
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Nancy Wohl, Editor

Finishing A Task

by Dr. Cecil Blankenship, ETSU

One of the most important concepts teachers can convey to special needs students is that of accepting responsibility that is commensurate with their ability level. Teachers are in an ideal position to teach students how to assume responsibility for their behaviors and activities. A big part of fulfilling one's responsibility is to complete a task that has been voluntarily accepted or assigned by the teacher. A student may not always relish the task that has been assigned to him/her, but it is important that teachers encourage him/her to complete the task anyway. Failing to complete a task or embarking upon so many tasks simultaneously that it is impossible to complete one or all of them promotes undesirable work habits. It is im-

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Directors MEMO Justification for Student Placement

Each spring, teachers begin to look at students who have been unsuccessful as potential special education students. However, when considering a student for referral, several factors need to be examined beforehand. First, remember that with the forty-day time frame for evaluations, psychologists may not be available to complete a referral late in the school year. As a rule of thumb, students should not be referred for an initial evaluation if there are not forty school days available to complete it. Also, regular education teachers must have written documentation of all of the attempted modifications and accommodations from the regular classroom. This should be accompanied by documentation of the times, materials and methods used with the student. If after these efforts it is still felt that an evaluation should take place, the following statements should be considered for justification.



Placement is considered after the student's educational services are determined. Removal of students from the regular education environment shall occur only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. Justification for placement statements must document that other placement options were considered, as well as the reasons they were rejected. The following are possible statements of justification:

1. Skills are below age and grade expectancy and the student/child requires a structured special education program to remediate the specifically identified areas of concern. Services can be appropriately provided in the regular education classroom setting with supplemental aids and services.

2. The student/child's present level of educational performance requires curricular modification and individualized instructional strategies. These services can be appropriately implemented in the regular classroom with direct service from special education personnel for a portion of the day.

3. Academic and cognitive skills are deficient to a level that requires specialized instruction provided in a small group setting for part of the day. This service can be appropriately implemented in a regular classroom with pull-out service from special education personnel.

4. The severity, frequency and consistency of the student/child's behavior indicate the need for a structured behavior management program that must be provided in a special education classroom. Implementation of the behavior program in the regular classroom has been unsuccessful.

5. The student/child's present levels of educational performance require total curricular modification and individualized instructional strategies. These services can be appropriately implemented in the regular classroom with direct service from special education personnel for the entire day.

6. The student/child's academic, social, motor, and independent living skills indicate the need for a highly structured environment.

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June 2nd
Students Last Day of School
June 3rd
Administrative Day
June 4th
Report Cards
Have a
Great Summer!!!

Four Steps to Conducting Successful One-on-One Sessions with Students

Teaching assistants are often asked to work with students one on one to practice problem-solving, to review lessons or to give informal tests. Have you ever thought about the best way to prepare for and conduct these types of activities? Following are some suggestions for getting the most out of a one-on-one tutoring session.

1. Plan and prepare

Talk with the student's teacher before the tutoring session. Learn the objective and find out what the student's strengths and weaknesses are so you're prepared to react to them. If a teacher provides you with confidential information about a student, remember to keep the information to yourself. Arrange for an environment that is conducive to accomplishing the task. Select appropriate table and chair heights, and make arrangements for any special needs of the student. Make sure there are no distractions and adjust lighting and ventilation, if necessary.

2. Get to know the student

Always use the student's first name, and expect the student to address you appropriately. Open the conversation with simple questions about the student's day, family or favorite free-time activities. Listen carefully for clues that might assist you during the session. Be supportive if you know the student is preoccupied with personal problems, but expect him to work with you. Communicate the importance of learning and completing the task. Keep the session's tone light and maintain your sense of humor to keep you and the student from unnecessary frustrations.

3. Conduct the session

Explain to the student the objective as outlined by the teacher. Have several instructional strategies in your "toolbag" in case things don't work out as planned. Ask the teacher or your supervisor for assistance if needed. Provide plenty of encouragement and praise throughout the session to sustain a "safe" environment for learning where the student can make mistakes but still feel good about what he's doing. Don't give the answer; guide the student through the process to find the answer independently.

4. Report to the teacher

Keep organized notes on each of the tutoring sessions. Jot down the date and time and any observable behaviors, including the student's performance. Report any concerns to the teacher and offer observations about the student's behavior.

Blankenship *continued*

portant for every special needs student to accept responsibility that is appropriate for his/her developmental level. Responsibility means accepting a reasonable task and agreeing to work toward that task until it is complete.

Teachers can assist the student in developing good work habits by structuring planned activities so the student has time to (1) prepare for the task, (2) work on the task, (3) complete the task and (4) clean up after the task has been completed. Some tasks require more than one day to complete. Tasks of this nature should still be planned with target dates for accomplishing each phase of the activity until it is complete. The teacher should monitor the project by staying informed of the student's progress and giving feedback to her/him. A culminating activity or event should be built into each planned project. For example, the student might discuss the final project with the teacher, present his/her work to the whole class, or share his/her final product with her/his family. In each instance the student experiences a sense of accomplishment and the idea of completing a task is reinforced.

Completing a task is one aspect of responsibility that will be most beneficial to a student in later life. Help your students develop this positive lifelong habit.

Justification *continued*

Services can only be appropriately implemented in a special program outside the student/child's home school.

7. A more restrictive placement is required to protect the health or safety of the student/child based on documented medical needs. Instruction can best be provided in the home or hospital.

8. The student/child's behavior is so disruptive in a regular school environment, even with extensive support from special education staff, including the use of supplemental aids and services and implementation of positive behavioral support strategies, that the student/child must be placed in an institution for instructional purposes.

Factors that may not be used to determine placement include the category of disability, configuration of the delivery system, availability of educational or related services, availability of space, and administrative convenience.

Equipment Sale and Give Away May 30th, June 2nd and 3rd

We are house-cleaning in the Materials Center this summer and have hardware and some software that will be offered free to a good classroom (or at a nominal fee if you want something for your own, home use). The things we need to clear out are items like: portable phonographs and cassette recorders, headphones, and 35mm film strip projectors.

We have no IBM-based PC's, but have many monitors (mostly 15 inch) and keyboards (both old and new 6-pin plug ins). We have a few printers, too (dot matrix and laser), but you would have to find and download the driver software for most of these.

For Macintosh fans: we have a lot of ImageWriter II printers, external floppies, some 13" monitors, and a few keyboards.

A few other gadgets that are not easy to describe in a short announcement are available, come see for yourself. Let parents know they can buy items, too. We will offer them on May 30, June 2nd and 3rd.