Office of the
State Superintendent of Education

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Division of Special Education

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Toolkit

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This publication has been developed pursuant to the guidelines of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) and the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations - Chapter 30 (DCMR), and may be reprinted without permission.

INTRODUCTION

OSSE *Mission*

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education sets high expectations, provides resources and support, and exercises accountability to ensure that all residents receive an excellent education.

OSSE *Vision*

All District residents receive an excellent education.

The ***District of Columbia Least Restrictive Environment Toolkit*** is a comprehensive guide which contains information and best practices to ensure that students with disabilities receive an excellent education. Additionally, this guide was developed to provide District of Columbia Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and other providers that serve District students with a framework to improve their inclusionary practices and effectively serve all District students.

This guide is aimed at providing educators, school professionals and others with meaningful strategies, to connect with the full range of diverse learners who exist in the classroom. However, while this guide is intended to help educators understand and apply some special education best practices, this guide **is not meant to:**

- Be a complete explanation of all special education laws and regulations;
- Give legal advice; or
- Supersede any local and/or federal law.

We hope that you find this toolkit useful and welcome your feedback.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT TOOLKIT

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CHAPTER I: Building a Foundation: Ensuring Access to the General Education Curriculum

Goal(s)

- LEAs will have the knowledge to create effective inclusive school environments and culturally responsive classrooms.

Understanding(s)

- Inclusion does not mean that students with disabilities are always educated in a general education classroom for 100% of the time.
- The terms "inclusion", "inclusive school environment", and "least restrictive environment" have different meanings.

Essential Question(s)

- How can a local education agency (LEA) create an inclusive school environment?

Skills and Knowledge

By the end of the chapter, LEAs will be able to:

- Differentiate between inclusion, inclusive school environments, and the least restrictive environment as contemplated in IDEA
- Identify the characteristics of an inclusive school environment
- Determine the key programs/structures that exist in a school which effectively promotes inclusionary practices
- Assess current practices and better align them with evidence-based best practices to create an inclusive school environment

Key Words and Terms

Inclusion

Inclusive School Environment

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Least Restrictive Environment

Positive Behavior and Instructional Supports (PBIS)

Response to Intervention (RtI)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Overview

Today, in the United States of America, classrooms have become more diverse than ever. Students come with an array of skills, talents, interests, and needs, and on a daily basis teachers and staff can observe a variety of different learning styles all at one time. Thus, it is important that a systematic approach is developed for applying the principles of teaching and learning when planning, managing, delivering, and evaluating instruction so that desired learning can occur and all students can be successful.

SECTION I. Inclusion

OSSE, in its *Least Restrictive Environment and Inclusion Policy* (2009, pg. 3-4), defines inclusive practices as practices which create "an environment in which all children, including those with significant disabilities, have an equal opportunity to receive high quality instruction in the general education classroom, to the maximum extent possible, with the necessary supplementary aids and services the child needs to be successful in the general education curriculum."

In the field of special education, ***inclusion*** is a term which expresses a commitment to educate students with disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school/classroom they would otherwise attend. The term "inclusion" is not, and should not be used synonymously with, the term "mainstreaming." The difference between both terms lies in their real-life application. Mainstreaming has been perceived and used as a "benchmark, where students 'earn' their way back into the classroom," while inclusion "establishes the student's 'right' to be there in the first place" (Robertson & Valentine, 1999). Inclusion involves bringing the support and services to the student rather than moving the student to the services.

The Federal law pertaining to special education, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), was written with the goal of ensuring that children with disabilities be included in, and have access to, public education to the same degree as their non-disabled peers. IDEA requires that each student with a disability requiring special education be educated in the least restrictive environment appropriate to meet his or her unique needs, based on individualized assessment and program planning. The IDEA contemplates that the "least restrictive environment" analysis will begin with consideration of placement in the general education setting. In this sense, the concept of least restrictive environment is distinct from the larger concept of inclusion because it is premised upon individualized program planning. Further discussion of designing IEPs and delivering services in the least restrictive environment can be found in the proceeding chapters.

SECTION II. Inclusive School Environments

Inclusive school environments are environments that actively promote a commitment to embracing, celebrating, and capitalizing upon differences. Culturally responsive educational strategies, differentiated instruction, accommodations and modifications, and the use of positive behavior supports are some of the inclusive practices that are evident in academic and non-academic settings within the school (see Figure 1.1).

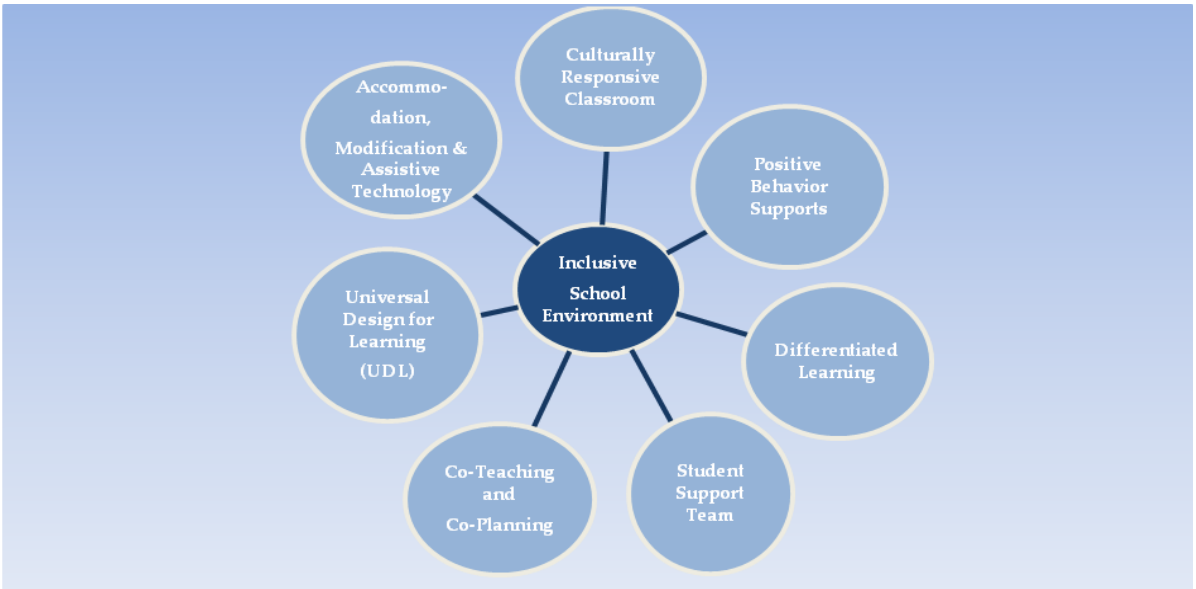

Figure 1.1. Components of Inclusive School Environments

As stated in OSSE's *Least Restrictive Environment and Inclusion Policy* (2009), "In an inclusive educational environment, general educators do not relinquish responsibility for students with special needs, but instead work cooperatively with special educators to provide high quality program. Inclusive educational environments:

- Maintain high expectations for all children;
- Actively identify and capitalize upon student strengths;
- Pursue the most effective instructional methods to foster high levels of achievement
- Regularly monitor student progress and redesign learning opportunities as needed;
- Collaborate with families and community members;
- Create educational programs that allow students with disabilities to participate fully in school life; and
- Embrace diversity."

Characteristics of Inclusive School Environments. According to the Inclusive Schools Network (2010), inclusive school environments should exhibit the following characteristics:

- Make sure each and every student feels welcome and is learning;
- Embrace the understanding that every student is unique and, therefore, learns differently;
- Understanding that all children (i.e. student with or without disabilities, English language learners), learn better if teaching is tailored to their abilities and interest;
- Collaborate with families;
- Hold high expectations for student success; and
- Keep improving.

Creating an Inclusive Environment. The following are steps that can be taken in creating an inclusive school environment:

1. Establish a local education agency (LEA) and school level consensus on what inclusive school environment means, and secure the commitment to pursue that vision. This can be accomplished by:
    - □ Gathering stakeholders to share common beliefs and work toward reaching an agreement on the meaning and vision of an inclusive school environment, as well as a commitment to pursue that vision
    - □ Developing a formalized document that captures the agreed upon understandings and commitments of all stakeholders
2. Institute ongoing collaboration and problem solving among educators, support staff, parents, and students. This can be accomplished by:
    - □ Setting up a group (with diverse representation) to:
        1. Establish well defined roles, responsibilities and norms for meetings
        2. Establish clear lines of communication
        3. Utilize data for decision making
3. Adopt curricular and instructional strategies that weave individual goals of students with disabilities into general education activities. This can be accomplished by:
    - □ Completing an inventory of current instructional strategies and practices that exists at the school
    - □ Analyzing the ways in which they are used to meet individual education program (IEP) goals and objectives

- Identifying areas of need
- Developing an action plan to implement additional strategies and activities

4. Schedule adequate time for collaboration. This can be accomplished by:
    - Establishing clear lines of communication
    - Identifying roles and responsibilities
    - Setting up adequate time for collaboration, identifying space appropriate for matters that will be addressed, and being sensitive to all participating stakeholders
    - Sharing with respective teams the topics that will be discussed at meeting and what is needed to prepare for the discussion
5. Provide strong administrative support, along with proactive and committed leadership. This can be accomplished by:
    - Modeling support and leadership by reinforcing expectations
    - When appropriate, allowing stakeholders to make decisions, and providing them with the necessary information and support to implement decisions
    - Probing continuously to see that everyone understands the issues/ideas
6. Establish parental involvement. This can be accomplished by:
    - Developing positive relationships with parent as partners
    - Clearly defining parental involvement expectations with staff
    - Proactively seeking parental support
    - Creating opportunities for parental involvement through various mechanisms
    - Providing ample time for notification to parents on activities/feedback
    - Setting clear lines of communication
    - Creating a task force of parents (may include educators) who will serve in an advisory capacity (e.g. parent-teacher organization-PTO)
7. Create strong peer networks and other natural supports. This can be done by:
    - Creating opportunities for networking
    - Developing a mechanism for regular communication with the network

SECTION III. Providing Access to the General Education Curriculum: An Overview of Promising School-Wide Models

Over the past several years, practitioners and scholars have developed effective, evidence-based frameworks designed to prevent mis- or over-identification, to increase students with disabilities' access to the core curriculum, and to ensure that all children are educated in the least restrictive environment. An overview of several school-wide, evidence-based models can be found below:

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), also known as *Positive Behavior Support (PBS)* and *Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)*, is referenced in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and its use is required for children with disabilities whose behavior impedes learning (theirs or that of others). PBIS is based on principles of applied behavior analysis and emphasizes the ability to prevent and/or extinguish negative behavior by reinforcing positive behavior and identifying a positive replacement behavior that meets the student's need.

PBIS emphasizes an increasingly individualized three-tiered approach to behavior support which assists school personnel in adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students.

Additionally, PBIS emphasizes the establishment of organizational supports or systems that provide school personnel with the ability to use effective interventions accurately and successfully at the school, district, and state levels. These supports include (a) team-based leadership, (b) data-based decision-making, (c) continuous monitoring of student behavior, (d) regular universal screening, and (e) effective on-going professional development. Through the creation of these systems, PBIS supports the success of ALL students.

Chapter II provides more detailed information on behavioral support planning and PBIS.

RESPONSE to INTERVENTION (RtI)

As defined by the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI), ***Response to Intervention*** **(RtI)** "integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. With RtI, schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning

disabilities or other disabilities" (NCRTI, 2010). In short, RtI utilizes all resources within a school in a collaborative manner to provide high-quality intervention and research- based educational support to all students at increasing levels of intensity based on individual need. While RtI's primary focus was academic intervention upon its inception, researchers and practitioners have begun to consider ways to integrate behavioral support and intervention into the RtI model and incorporate the multi-tiered PBIS framework outlined above.

Essential Components of RtI. NCRTI notes that the following four components are essential for a successful implementation of RtI:

1. A school-wide, multi-level instructional and behavioral system for preventing school failure;
2. Screening;
3. Progress monitoring; and
4. Data-based decision making for instruction, movement within the multi-level system, and disability identification.

Chapter II provides more detailed information about Response to Intervention.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning **(UDL)**, as defined by the National Center on Universal Design for Learning (2010), is "a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn." UDL provides a framework for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone.

In today's classroom, students come with an array of needs, skills, and interests. Often the typical curriculum is not flexible to meet the needs and skills of those students, and the mismatch can result in low academic achievement and negative behavior. UDL turns this scenario around, placing the burden to adapt on the curriculum rather than on the student.

The National Center on Universal Design for Learning describes the three primary principles that provide the structure for UDL. They include:

- **Principle I: Provide Multiple means of Representation (the "What" of Learning)**

  Because not all students learn the same way and information is taken in differently by each student, instructional activities should allow for different means of delivering the information to students (i.e. visual learning, auditory learning, etc.).

- **Principle II: Provide Multiple Means of Expression (the "How" of Learning)**

  As noted by the National Center on Universal Design for Learning, "students differ in

the way they are able to navigate a learning environment and express what they know." To that extent, the curriculum has to be flexible in how it expects students to express their learning. Various options may be needed (i.e. writing assignments, oral presentations, etc.)

- **Principle III: Provide Multiple Means of Engagement (the "Why" of Learning)**

  No one form of engagement will capture all students' attention or motivate them to learn. Some students are highly engaged by new and out of routine activities, while others can be disengaged or even frightened by those approaches and prefer a routine. To that extent, providing multiple options for engagement is essential.

  For more information on UDL, see:
  http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines

CHAPTER II: Inclusionary Practices

Figure 2.1. Components of Inclusive School Environments

Goal(s)

- Administrators will create a school community in which difference is celebrated and capitalized upon.
- Teachers will create a classroom community in which each student's culture is central to learning.

Understanding(s)

- Culture is more than race and ethnicity and encompasses other factors such as age, gender, social class, language, and life experiences
- Knowledge of students experiences and beliefs are valuable for designing instruction, interpreting classroom behavior, and analyzing academic performance
- Co-teaching is often misidentified as being synonymous with "collaboration," "team teaching," or "inclusion"
- All students in the general education classroom benefit when two (or more) teachers effectively support the teaching and learning process
- School-wide systems and classroom systems must be in place to proactively reinforce appropriate student behavior and consistently address inappropriate behavior
- Student Support Teams must be in place to identify academic and behavioral interventions for students who need targeted supports
- Functionally based individualized behavior intervention plans must be in place for all students who need targeted support, regardless of whether they have an identified disability
- In order to teach effectively, teachers must have high expectations; establish consistent routines and procedures; and utilize rules with logical and timely reinforcers and consequences

Essential Question(s)

- How do we increase the capacity of teachers to deliver/provide quality instruction for all learners?
- What does it mean to have a school with positive behavior supports and interventions?
- When should a student receive a behavior intervention plan?

Skills and Knowledge:

By the end of the chapter LEAs will:

- Recognize the characteristics of culturally responsive teachers
- Identify the principles of culturally responsive teaching

- Create an environment that promotes culturally responsive education
- Be able to define and describe the characteristics of co-teaching
- Describe five different types of co-teaching models
- Be able to plan and deliver effective classroom instruction in the general education classroom for all students

Key Words and Terms:

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

Co-Planning/ Co-Teaching

Culture

Culturally Responsive Classroom, Teacher

Curriculum Map

Differentiation

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

Response to Intervention (RtI)

Student Support Team (SST)

Unit Planning

SECTION I. Culturally Responsive Classrooms

Merriam-Webster (2010) defines ***culture*** as "the customary beliefs, social norms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group…the set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterizes and institution or organization." According to Ladson-Billings (Integrating New Technologies into the Methods of Education- INTIME, 2002), within the realm of education, the ***culturally responsive classroom*** is built on the idea that culture is central to student learning. It is an approach that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to teach knowledge, skill and attitudes (INTIME, 2002). The use of cultural referents in teaching bridges and explains the mainstream culture, while valuing and recognizing students' own cultures.

Culturally Responsive Teachers

Preparing teachers to be culturally responsive is a pressing issue in teacher education. Villegas & Lucas (2002) push the barriers that exist in what for so long has been the accepted perspective of a homogeneous classroom culture. They impel educators to

seriously examine their classroom environment by describing the six characteristics a ***Culturally Responsive Teacher (CRT)*** should possess. The characteristics include (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) the following elements:

1. CRTs have socio-cultural consciousness, which is defined as being able to understand that the way individuals believe, react to, and interact with others, and learn is influenced by factors such as race/ethnicity, social class, and language. Possessing such characteristics allows teachers to cross cultural boundaries that exist throughout their classroom
2. CRTs believe that diversity exists within a classroom, and embrace the differences as resources for learning rather than a negative existence
3. CRTs uphold a commitment to act as a change agent to promote learning among students and to be educationally responsive
4. CRTs are able to embrace learning as an active process which results in everyone learning by using the students' own experience and incorporating the students' specific learning needs
5. CRTs have knowledge of their students' past experiences and beliefs, which comes from both the students' personal and cultural experiences
6. CRTs develop a curriculum that uses a constructivist approach, building from what is already known by students while pushing them beyond the familiar

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching refers to "instructional practices… designed with learners' cultural values, knowledge, and way of learning taking into account... that empower students to succeed" (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). This link between culture and classroom instruction comes from evidence that cultural practices shape thinking process, which serves as a tool for learning within and outside of school (INTIME, 2002).

Principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching include:

- **Communication of High Expectations-** Messaging is clear and consistent-from both teachers and the whole school, that students will succeed, based upon genuine respect for students and belief in student ability
- **Active Teaching Methods-** Learning is designed to promote student engagement by involving students in the development of curriculum and learning activities
- **Teacher as Facilitators-** The teacher's role is one of guide, mediator, and knowledgeable consultant, as well as instructor
- **Positive Perspectives on Parental/Community Involvement-** There is on-going communication with students, parents, and the community on important issues and inclusion of these individuals in classroom curriculum and activities

- **Cultural Sensitivity-** Teachers gain knowledge of the cultures represented in their classrooms and translate this knowledge into instructional practice
- **Reshaping the Curriculum-** A restructured curriculum that is culturally responsive to the background of the students
- **Culturally Mediated Instruction-** Instruction is characterized by the use of culturally mediated cognition, culturally appropriate social situation for learning and culturally valued knowledge in curriculum content
- **Student- Controlled Classroom Discourse-** Students are given the opportunity to control some portion of the lesson, providing teachers with insight into the ways that speech and negotiation are used in the home and community
- **Small Group Instruction and Academically-related Discourse-** instruction is organized around low pressure, student- controlled learning groups that can assist in the development of academic language

Creating a Culturally Responsive Classroom

Culturally responsive classrooms are classrooms that recognize diversity among its students and thus provide opportunities for students to make relevant connections among themselves, through learning activities (Montgomery, 2001). To create such a classroom takes commitment of teachers who are willing to implement strategies that promote responsiveness. Strategies to create such an environment include (Montgomery, 2001):

- **Self- Assessment and Reflection.** One of the first major steps is to understand the state of the current classroom environment. Through a self-assessment, followed by a period of reflection, teachers can begin taking a closer look at themselves, their understanding of culture, how it is being translated in the classroom, and their relationship with students. At that point, teachers can then begin making decisions on how to embrace diversity and create an environment that welcomes diversity.
- **Culturally Sensitive Instructional Methods and Materials.** Critical to creating effective culturally responsive classrooms is the usage of culturally sensitive instructional methods and materials. Teachers need to be aware of the variety of instructional methods that can be used in the classroom and those that are most effective to the classroom setting, meet the students' needs and fit with the subject matter being taught. Examples include: explicit instruction, strategic instruction, instructional scaffolding, and journal writing.
- **Atmosphere of Respect.** By creating an atmosphere where all students feel that they are equal and productive members of the larger group, students will develop a positive feeling about their worth and academic success. To accomplish that,

teachers must establish an environment where the "whole" (classroom) only works when all of its "parts" (students) are working together. Examples of activities include: culturally diverse-focused bulletin boards that display positive activities/events; a mini-library with culturally diverse literature; discussions on culturally diverse topics, and instructional strategies that incorporate reflection and personal narrative.

- **Interactive Learning.** To understand the diversity that exists within the classroom, students must have the opportunity to interact, share thoughts and ideas, work together and accomplish goals together. Through such interactions, students will gain the understanding that although individual differences may exist, group goals can still be attained. Example activities include: cooperative learning groups, guided and informal group discussions, and activities that expand the boundaries of learning beyond the classroom, such as use of the internet.
- **Culturally Aware Assessment.** Throughout the academic year, teachers will need to monitor and assess their students' abilities, interests, social skills, and learning/communication styles. Such information will give teachers a chance to assess their current practice, identify what needs to be taught, and determine how to effectively teach it. Examples of assessments include: daily observation of students' social and learning behaviors; portfolio assessment; tests that are closely tied to the instructional program; teacher/student self-assessment.
- **Stakeholder Collaboration.** Collaboration among stakeholders (families and other professionals) is critical in maintaining a culturally responsive classroom. Families and other stakeholders need to feel welcome to share their view on, and be informed about, how their students' are doing. They should also feel encouraged to participate in activities whenever possible. Examples of collaborative activities include: regular meetings/consultations to share ideas with families and other professionals on students, regular communications with families, cultural celebration with families and other professionals, including events such as assemblies with invited culturally diverse guest speakers.

SECTION II. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS), also known as and used interchangeably with Positive Behavior Support (PBS) and School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS), is defined by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) as, "an empirically validated, function-based approach to eliminate behaviors and replace them with pro-social skills" (Cohn, 2001). PBIS is not a new intervention package, nor a new theory of behavior. PBIS is an approach that uses positive behavior interventions for achieving positive social and learning outcomes while preventing and addressing difficult behavior (Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000).

The core principles of PBIS include (Sugai et al., 1999):

1. **Educators can effectively teach appropriate behavior to all children.** PBIS is founded on the belief that all students can exhibit appropriate behavior. However, it is the responsibility of educators to identify the setting and environmental conditions that provide the opportunity for appropriate behavior to be exhibited.
2. **Early intervention.** It is best practice to intervene before targeted behaviors occur. If interventions occur before problematic behaviors escalate, it is much more manageable.
3. **Use of a multi-tier model of service delivery.** PBIS uses an efficient, needs-driven resource deployment system to match behavioral resources with student need. To achieve high rates of student success for all students, instruction in the school must be differentiated in both nature and intensity.
4. **Use of research-based, scientifically validated interventions.** No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires the use of scientifically based curricula and interventions. Research-based, scientifically, validated interventions provide the best opportunity for educators to implement strategies that will be effective for large majority of students.
5. **Monitoring of student progress to inform interventions.** The only way to determine student improvement is to monitor student progress. Determining the effectiveness of an intervention early helps maximize the impact of that intervention for the student.
6. **Use of data to make decisions.** A data-based decision regarding student response to interventions is central to PBIS practices. Decisions are based on professional judgment informed directly by student discipline referral and performance data. This will require ongoing data collection and data collection systems to be in place. The resulting data are used to make informed behavioral intervention planning decisions.

7. **Use of assessment for three different purposes.** In PBIS, three types of assessments are used: 1) screening of data comparison per day and per month for total discipline referrals, 2) diagnostic determination of data by time of day, problem behavior, and location and 3) progress monitoring to determine if behavioral interventions are producing desired effects.

Three-Tiered Model. PBIS utilizes a three-tiered model approach that includes Primary Level of Prevention (Tier I), Secondary Level of Prevention (Tier II), and Tertiary Level of Prevention (Tier III). The following provides a description of each of the three tiers. (See Figure 2.2- Integration of Academic and Social Behavior Three-Tiered Continuum of Behavior Support, Sugai, G. 2001).

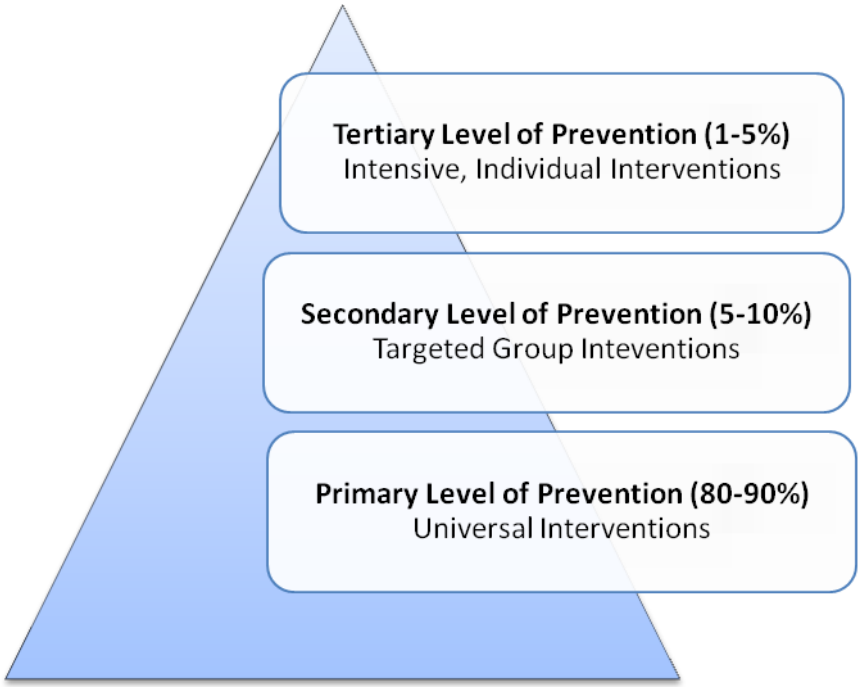

Figure 2.2. Integration of Academic and Social Behavior Three-Tiered Continuum of Behavior Support, Sugai, G. 2001.

Primary Level of Prevention (Tier I). In this tier, universal interventions that are preventative in nature are put into place. This tier is significant because it moves the structural framework of each educational unit from reactive approaches to proactive systems of change. All students are exposed to a core social behavior curriculum and specific behavioral expectations to prevent the development of problem behavior and to detect those students who are having difficulty with core behavior expectations (Lane et al., 2007).

It is crucial in Tier I that school-wide and classroom prevention policies and procedures are developed and put in place and that a menu of strategies for targeted students is available (i.e. establish peer tutoring, mediation, develop and teach school and classroom behavioral expectations). It is also important to make sure that classroom management is planned and there is consistency and fidelity in implementing the plan. If individual students are displaying "acting out" behaviors, staff need to determine if there are underlying academic concerns, and if academic needs are identified, address them accordingly (Sugai et al, 2000).

Secondary Level of Prevention (Tier II). Tier II is designed to provide targeted, more intensive interventions to support students who are not responding to Tier I efforts. Lane et al. (2007) note, "Supplemental social behavior support is added to reduce the number and intensity of problem behaviors." Interventions at this level are designed by school-building staff (i.e. teachers, counselor, etc.) and are tailored to support a smaller number of students who are at risk for engaging in more serious problem behavior and need a little more support. Common strategies in this tier include behavior contracts, conflict resolution, small group activities, and differentiated academic programs (Martella & Nelson, 2003). Students who continue to exhibit patterns of disruptive, potentially dangerous, behaviors may be referred to tertiary level of prevention strategies.

Tertiary Prevention (Tier III). Tier III is the most individualized and intensive of all three levels. This tier is designed to focus on the needs of students who exhibit patterns of disruptive behavior that are potentially dangerous, and/or impede learning and result in social or educational exclusion (Lane et al., 2007).

In this tier, the development and implementation of individualized supports are best executed when they are conducted in a collaborative manner. The planning process should include individuals who know the student and can speak to the difficulties being encountered in the school/classroom, so that all can work together to "wrap around" the student and promote positive change as a support team.

Both Tier II and Tier III often include the development of a functionally-based individualized behavior plan, which includes conducting a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and using the results of that assessment to develop an effective behavior intervention plan (BIP). In some cases, the plan may also include emergency procedures to ensure safety and rapid de-escalation of severe episodes (Martella et al., 2003).

Conducting Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs)

The FBA is an assessment process which entails gathering and analyzing information, from multiple data sources and settings, about a student's behavior and accompanying circumstances in order to determine the purpose or intent of the actions. This investigation is designed to help educators:

- Determine the appropriateness of the student's present educational placement and services, and whether changes would help the student to display more acceptable behavior
- Identify positive interventions that would reduce the undesirable behavior
- Identify appropriate behaviors to be substituted in the place of the inappropriate behaviors
- Use the analysis to create an effective ***Behavior Intervention Plan*** **(BIP)**

Functional behavior assessments are based upon the following assumptions:

- Challenging behaviors do not occur in a vacuum; there is a reason for the occurrence
- Behaviors occur in response to an identifiable stimulus (event)
- Behaviors are governed by the consequences that follow them
- Behaviors serve a function (to obtain/get something or avoid/escape something) and are a form of communication

Once the function of a behavior is identified, practitioners can incentivize more appropriate replacement behaviors that address the same need/function. For more information and effective tools for developing Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans, see: http://www.pbis.org/

SECTION III. Response to Intervention

As noted in Chapter 1, Response to Intervention is a promising school-wide intervention model designed to identify and proactively address learning challenges. While initially conceptualized solely as an academic intervention model, both RtI and PBIS experts have been developing a more comprehensive framework that integrates three tiers of increasingly intensive academic and behavior supports.

Essential Components of RtI. NCRTI notes that the following four components are essential for a successful implementation of RtI:

1. A school-wide, multi-level instructional and behavioral system for preventing school failure;
2. Screening;

3. Progress monitoring; and
4. Data-based decision making for instruction, movement within the multi-level system, and disability identification.

The following figure shows how each component is essential to RtI:

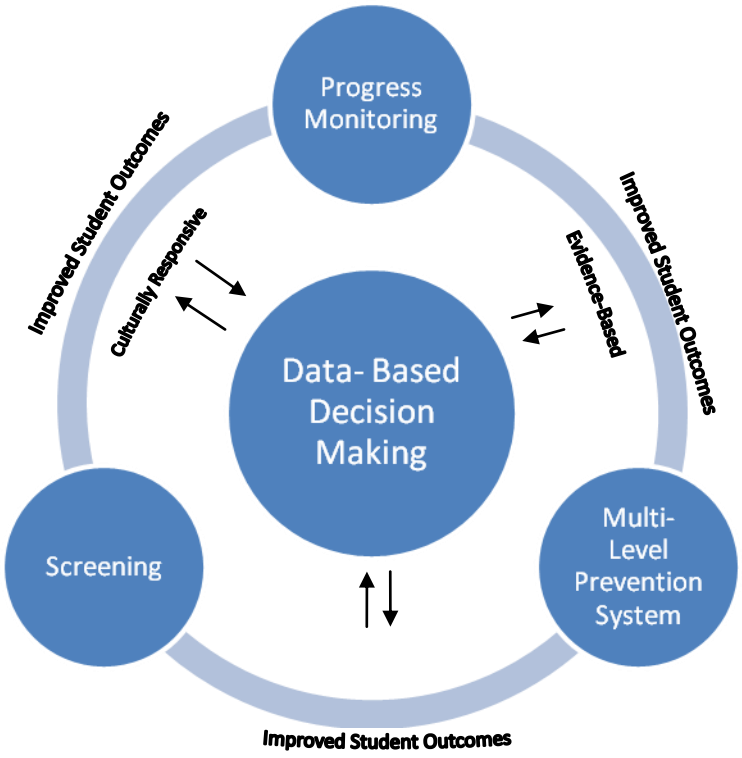

Figure 2.3. Essential components of RtI (adapted from NCRTI, 2010)

Conceptualizing RtI. While multiple models of RtI implementation exist, it is frequently viewed as a three-tiered approach, in which each increasingly intensive tier builds on the other while using research-based interventions throughout (NCRTI, 2010). The following (see Figure 2.4) is a commonly used framework, followed by a more detailed description of each level.

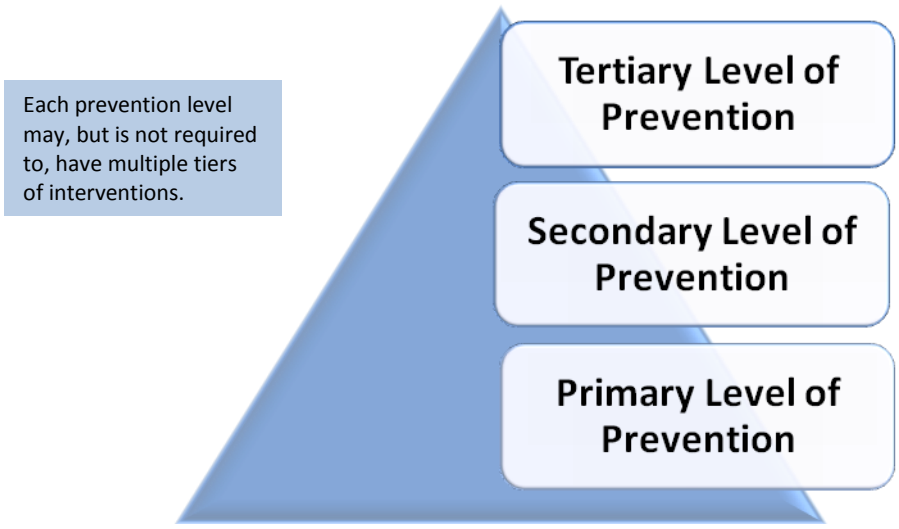

Figure 2.4. RtI Three-Level Model (adapted from the NCRTI, 2010)

Primary Level of Prevention. This level of prevention focuses on the core curriculum and the use of research-based instruction for all students in the general education setting. According to the NCRTI (2010), primary prevention includes:

- A core curriculum that is research-based
- Instructional practices that are culturally and linguistically responsive
- Universal screening to determine students' current level of performance
- Differentiated learning activities (e.g. mixed instructional grouping, use of learning centers, peer tutoring) to address individual needs
- Accommodations to ensure all students have access to the instructional program
- Problem solving to identify interventions, as needed, to address behavior problems that prevent students from demonstrating the academic skills they possess

Students who continue to exhibit learning difficulties may receive additional primary level instruction or be considered for more intensive interventions-- moving into the secondary level of prevention.

***Secondary Level of Prevention*.** At this level, additional targeted short-term interventions are provided for those students who exhibit poor responses to the intervention provided at the primary level. NCRTI (2010) notes that typically, at this level, prevention involves small- group instruction that relies on evidence-based interventions that include specific instructional procedures, duration (typically 10 to 15 weeks of 20- to 40-minute sessions), and frequency (3 or 4 times per week) of instruction. It is critical to note that the interventions provided at this level are in addition to, not in lieu of, the core instruction.

Student progress should be monitored frequently to assess the effectiveness of interventions. Once a student can demonstrate measurable improvement, both academically and behaviorally, interventions at this level can be discontinued, and primary level interventions can be provided. That said, some students may display progress but continue to need secondary prevention supplemental supports, which is acceptable as well. However, for those students who continue to exhibit learning difficulties, they may be considered for more intensive interventions and moved to the tertiary level of prevention.

Tertiary Level of Prevention. This level is the most intensive of the three levels, and is individualized to target each student's area(s) of need. Modifications in frequency, duration and/or teacher-student ratio are strategies to increase intensity. While providing intensive intervention at this level, teachers should concurrently be conducting frequent progress monitoring to measure the rate of improvement of the student over time and modify components of the intervention as needed. NCRTI notes that by continually monitoring and modifying (as needed) each student's program, the teacher is able to design an effective, individualized instructional program. Students who do not respond to tertiary level interventions may be referred for a comprehensive evaluation to determine eligibility for special education and related services.

For more information on RtI, see: http://www.rti4success.org/ and http://www.rtinetwork.org

SECTION IV. Differentiated Learning

In the field of education, ***differentiation*** is a process through which teachers enhance learning by matching student characteristics to instruction and assessment. It allows all students to access the same classroom curriculum by providing entry points, learning tasks, and outcomes that are tailored to students' needs. It also addresses issues of diversity, as student characteristics provide the basis for planning and instruction.

- In a differentiated classroom, variance occurs in the way in which students gain access to the content being taught (Hall et al., 2003). Teachers can differentiate content, process, and/or product for students. ***Differentiation of content*** refers to a change in the material being learned by the student. ***Differentiation of process*** refers to the way in which the student accesses material. ***Differentiation of product*** refers to the way in which the student shows what has been learned (Tomlinson, 1997).

- When teachers differentiate, they do so in response to students' readiness (the

student's skill level and background knowledge), interest (the topics the student may want to explore), and/or learning profile. Learning profile includes learning style (e.g., is the student a visual, auditory, tactile, or kinesthetic learner), grouping preferences (e.g., does the student work best individually, with a partner, or in a group), and environmental preference (e.g., does the student need space or a quiet area to work). When a teacher differentiates, all of these factors can be taken into account individually or in combination (Tomlinson, 2001). In Figure 2.5, a diagram is provided of the learning cycle and decision factors used in planning and implementing differentiated instruction.

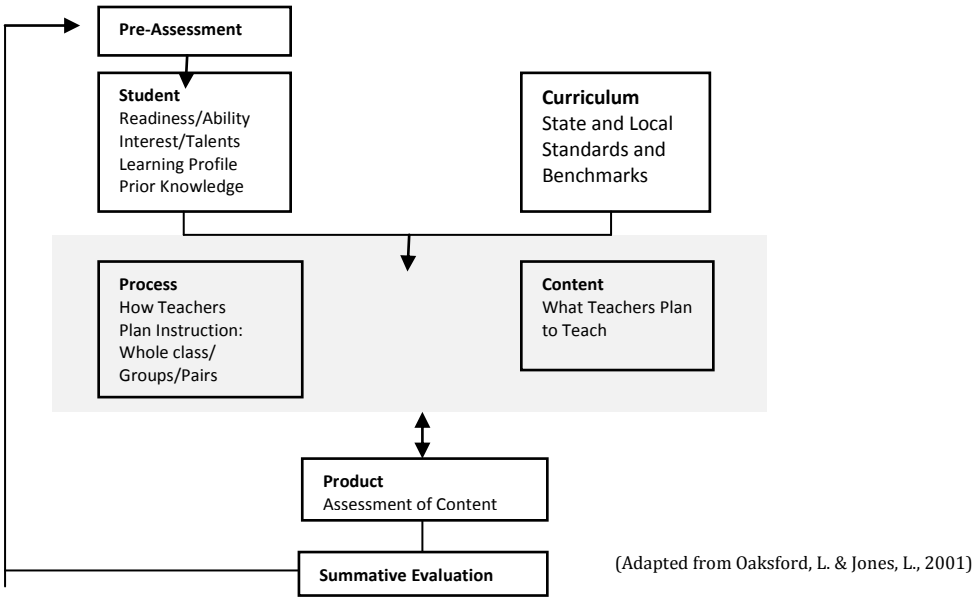

Figure 2.5. Learning Cycle and Decision Factors Used in Planning and Implementing Differentiated Instruction

SECTION V. Co-Teaching and Co-Planning

In efforts to meet LRE obligations and effectively address federally established expectations for more inclusive schools, schools have had to rethink the way in which services are delivered to all students and be creative regarding service delivery options. As a result, many schools have increased the level of collaboration amongst their teachers through the adoption of co-teaching models. Cook & Friend (2004) define ***co-teaching*** as, "a service delivery option that include two (or more) educators… contracted to share instructional responsibility for a single group of students, primarily in a single classroom or workspace for specific content (objectives) with mutual ownership, pooled resources and joint accountability, although each individual's level of participation may vary."

What Co-Teaching Is Not

Co-teaching has become one of the fastest growing inclusive school practices; however, it also remains one of the most commonly misunderstood practices in education. One of the reasons it is misunderstood is due to the fact that it is often confused with other terms commonly used in the field of education, including "collaboration, team teaching and inclusion" (Cook & Friend, 2004). While effective co-teaching contains elements of collaboration and team teaching and results in the creation of more inclusive environments, it is more than these terms alone, and is a practice which is often implemented incompletely or ineffectively.

The following are ways that co-teaching has been incorrectly implemented in classrooms (Cook & Friend, 2004):

- Teachers taking turns teaching different subjects
- One teacher teaching while the other teacher prepares for instruction
- One teacher teaching while the other teacher simply observes with no plan of sharing observation or feedback
- Only one teacher's ideas are used in the preparation and delivery of instruction

  In an effective co-teaching model, teachers are held equally responsible for the preparation and the delivery of instruction.

Why Co-Teaching?

Cook & Friend (2004) note some reasons why schools have opted for co-teaching:

1. Co-teaching promotes inclusive practices by providing a way for schools to deliver services to student with disabilities in an inclusive setting.
2. With co-teaching, all students can receive improved instruction.
3. Students benefit by not having to leave class to receive services, and service providers having a better understanding of the curriculum, academic and behavior expectations being taught in the classroom.
4. Co-teaching fosters a sense of support. Co-teachers work as a unified team and go through challenges and accomplishments together.

The Five Models of Co-Teaching (Adapted from Cook & Friend, 2004)

	One Teaches, One Observes	Complementary Teaching	Station Teaching	Parallel Teaching	Alternative Teaching	Shared Teaching
Description	One teacher keeps primary responsibility for teaching, while the other teacher observes for specific information and gathers data.	One teacher keeps primary responsibility for teaching, while the other teacher circulates through the room providing assistance to students.	Teachers divide content and students. Each teacher teaches the content to one group and then repeats the instruction for the other groups.	Both teachers simultaneously teach the same information to two separate groups of students within the classroom.	One teacher takes responsibility of the larger group while the other teacher works with a smaller group.	Both teachers deliver the same instruction at the same time.
Monitoring	Teachers decide in advance what types of specific observational information to gather during instruction and agree on a system for gathering the data.	One teacher models organization of the lesson and identifies skills and strategies needed for groups and individual students to complete the task of the lesson. The other teacher assists.	Both teachers segment the lesson and divide the number of stations they are responsible for. Both teachers plan and organize their station activities with attention to possible group differences.	Both teachers collaboratively organize the lesson and identify strategies needed for groups and individual students.	Both teachers make decisions about the content and organization of the lesson and determine appropriate structures for alternative remedial for enrichment lessons.	Both teachers make decisions about the content and organization of the lesson and teach simultaneously to the whole class.
Benefits/ Outcomes	Allows for more detailed observation of students engaged in the learning process.	One teacher conducts formal teaching while the other can teach components of the lesson with small groups. Same teacher provide content support to lead teacher's lesson.	Both teachers segment learning to small groups or individuals at the stations they design.	Both teachers independently deliver the lesson to each of the groups. Additionally, both teachers facilitate learning in their groups.	One teacher conducts formal teaching, while the other teaching implements supplemental activities for the whole group, small groups or individuals before or after the lesson.	Both teachers conduct formal teaching.
Design	Teachers decide who will teach, who will observe, and what specific observation information/ data to gather.	One teacher uses pre-assessment to determine students' need for support. Other teacher assesses student's skills and facilitates self-regulation during the lesson. Students use self-assessment as they request assistance during or after a lesson.	Both teachers use pre-assessment to determine how students are selected for stations. Given the organizational structure and tasks of each station, assessment done by students can be used during the lesson.	Both teachers monitor their groups of students and use post lesson reflection to share their expectations using the same lesson plan with different groups of students.	Both teachers pre-assess the students to plan for alternative lessons. Both teachers assess students during the lesson to identify students who would benefit from the alternative lessons. Student self-assessments and/or peer-assessment encourage students to articulate their need for alternative forms of instruction.	Both teachers pre-assess the students and assess during the less to identify students who would benefit from alternative lessons.
Communication	Both teachers analyze the information gathered together.	Two teachers help individual students after the lesson is presented (individual guided practice).	Facilitates small group learning and is responsive to individual needs.	Helpful whenever there is a need to increase the likelihood of participation, publication, and sharing. Allows for intensive work with a small group of students.	Allows for the use of alternative methods to re-teach or extend the lesson. This model promotes the need for more visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic support to communicate certain skills and concepts/ideas.	Powerful when the entire class is participating in a particular inquiry project like a thematic unit.

Basis for Selecting a Co-Teaching Approach

Co-teaching is most effective when the approaches used are deliberately selected. The following are four factors to weigh in selecting a co-teaching approach (Cook & Friend, 2004):

1. **Student characteristics and needs.** If students tend to become disruptive during transitions, an approach should be selected that minimizes transitions. Conversely, if students need extra motivation frequent changes might be preferred.
2. **Teacher characteristics and needs.** Co-teaching will be different in different classrooms and at different times based on teacher characteristics and needs.
3. **Curriculum, including content and instructional strategies.** Classroom content and instructional strategies that are most effective for addressing the content should also be considered. Highly structured content, such as an experiment may require one approach while a group discussion may require another approach.
4. **Pragmatic consideration.** Pragmatics of the setting should be taken into consideration. For example, in an open school, noise is a consideration in selecting an approach, while in a crowded classroom, space should be considered.

Planning for Effective Co-Teaching

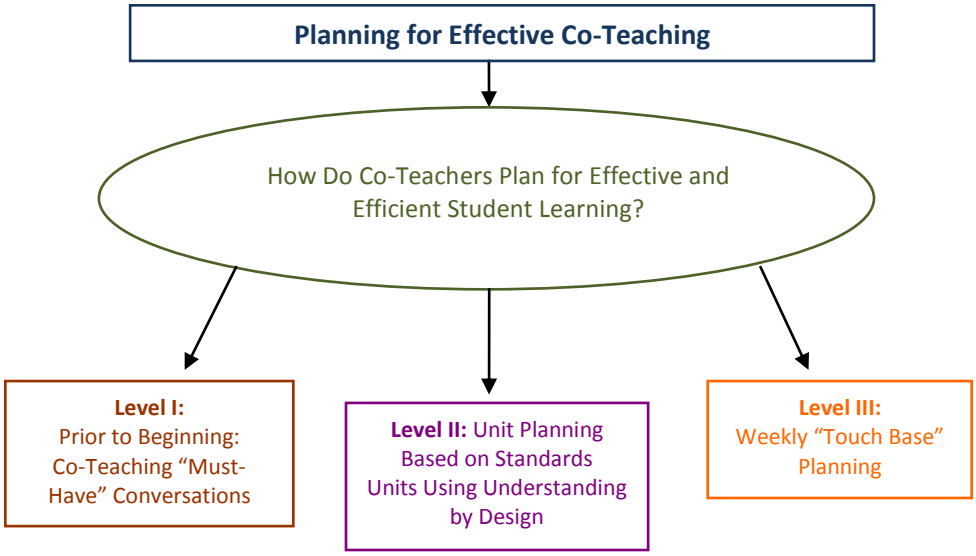

Figure 2.6 R. Wilson, M. Hughes, R. Waugh, & P. Alberto: The Center for Collaborative Education, Georgia State University 2006

Level I: Prior to Beginning: Co-Teaching "Must-Have Conversations"

The first level is designed to give co-teachers an opportunity to create a vision of how the class will be structured and managed. This level will require co-teachers to have a "must-have" conversation about the various aspects of classroom (e.g. instruction, management and learning profiles of all the students) (Wilson et al., 2006). Discussion should include (Wilson et al., 2006):

Parity/Equality and Space. These two issues are important in relaying the message to students that there are two qualified teachers in the classroom and both are equally responsible for the teaching in the classroom. Some examples include: both names on the door and on all correspondence, introduction of both teachers on the first day.

Professional Behavior. It is important that both teachers establish instructional procedures and expectations for the class; including the expectation that both teachers be on time and remain in class for the entire class period. Expectations should be taught and evident from the first day of school and posted as a reminder for students.

Behavior Management. A class-wide behavior management plan, implemented equally by both teachers, is important in maintaining an effective co-teaching classroom. The plan should be detailed, explicit and reviewed with all students. In addition, teachers should make sure that there are ample opportunities to earn rewards, and if a reward is taken away, there should be a way to earn it back. If students see no opportunity to earn rewards back, behaviors can escalate.

Some students may have a BIP. Strategies on how to implement such a plan within the general education classroom should be discussed between the co-teachers.

Review of the IEPs. It is important that all who work with students with disabilities be familiar with the students' IEPs. Special education teachers should review the IEPs with the general education teachers to ensure appropriate planning.

Grading and Testing. Co-teachers must decide on how students with disabilities will be assigned grades and how that job will be shared between the co-teachers.

Parental Involvement. Co-teachers should communicate with all the parents in the classroom, with the purpose that both teachers share equal responsibility for all students.

Pet Peeves/Feedback. Discussion should also include knowing each other's pet peeves in the classroom, as it will help co-teachers support each other.

Level II: Unit Planning Based on Standards Units Using Understanding by Design[1]

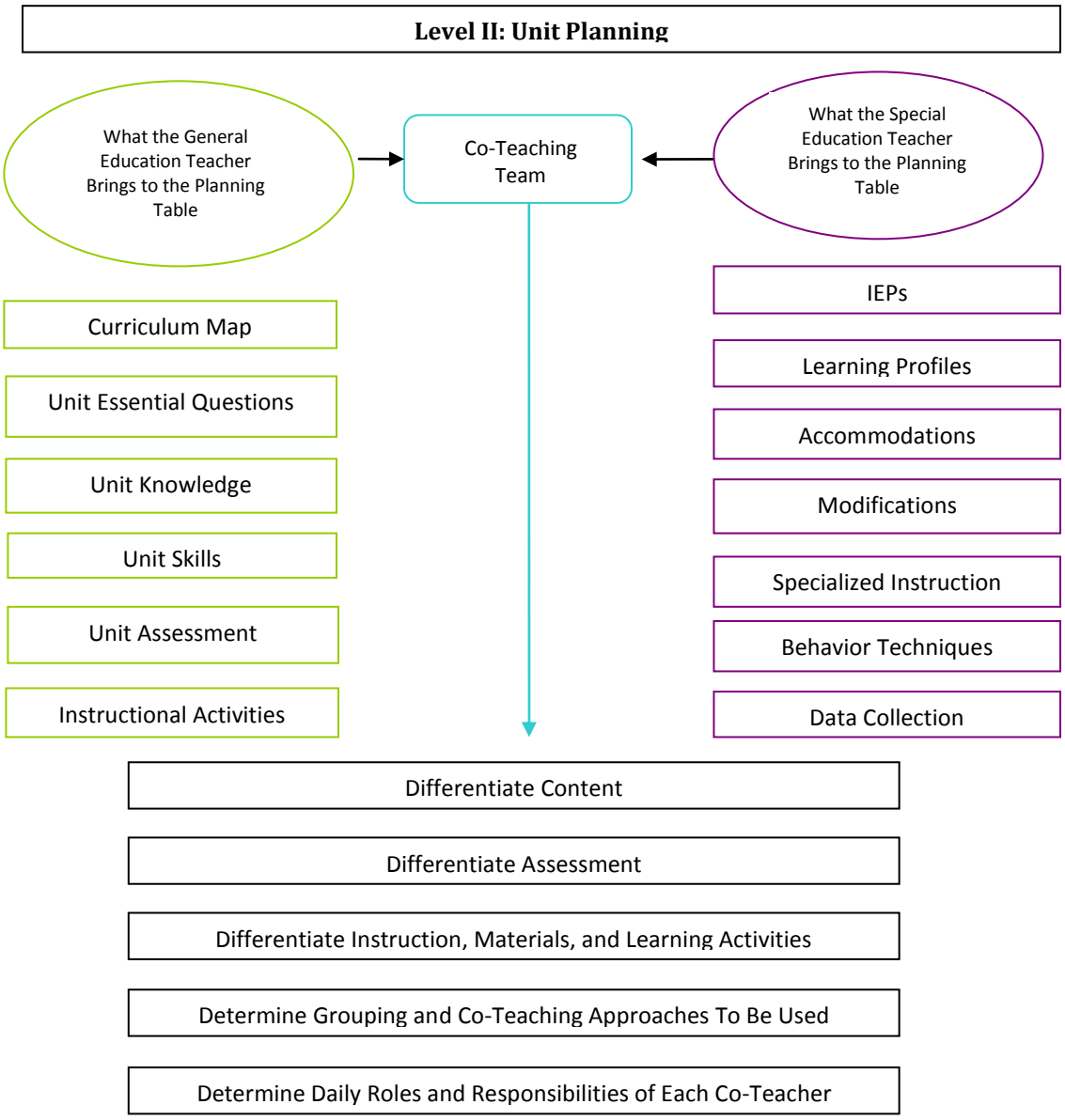

Figure 2.7 Adapted From R. Wilson, M. Hughes, P. Alberto, & R. Waugh: The Center for Collaborative Education,

Planning performance standards units is the second level of planning. A ***unit*** is predetermined chunk of content that is linked together by a theme or concept (Wilson et al., 2006). ***Unit planning*** allows co-teachers to effectively plan for longer periods of time, using time more efficiently. It takes place once the curriculum map has been established for the course or grade level. A ***curriculum map*** identifies the content to be taught, the order

[1] *Understanding By Design* (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005) is a framework for designing curriculum, assessments, and instruction. This framework provides teachers and/or curriculum planners with tools to ensure that students are able to understand content and transfer their understanding, or "appropriately connect, make sense of, and use discrete knowledge and skills in context."

in which it will be taught, and the number of days to be spent on the topic.

Once a curriculum map has been identified, teachers can begin discussion on unit planning. For the purpose of this toolkit, unit development will be based on the Understanding by Design (UBD) model.

Stage 1: Identify desired results. This stage focuses establishing priorities. In this stage teachers must assess the intended goals, analyze established content standards, and review curriculum expectations. Wiggins & McTighe (2005) note that because in reality there is more content than can be "reasonably addressed," choices have to made about what content will be focused on first, and prioritize.

Stage 2: Determine acceptable evidence. This stage focuses on what forms of assessment will demonstrate that desired learning has been achieved. This approach, Wiggins and McTighe note, encourages teachers to first 'think like an assessor' before designing specific units and lessons, and thus to consider up front how they will determine if students have attained the desired understandings.

Stage 3: Plan learning experiences and instruction. During this stage teachers are impelled to thoughtfully assess what instructional activities are appropriate at this point in order to achieve the desired learning. Wiggins & McTighe note that several key questions must be considered at this stage of backward design: What enabling knowledge (facts, concepts, principles) and skills (processes, procedures, strategies) will students need in order to perform effectively and achieve desired results? What activities will equip students with the needed knowledge and skills? What will need to be taught and coached, and how should it best be taught, in light of performance goals? What materials and resources are best suited to accomplish these goals?

What Co-Teachers Plan Together

Co-teachers plan together in six different phases, as follows (Wilson et al., 2006):

Phase I: Differentiate Content. Using the curriculum map and unit plan, co-teachers can visually identify the understandings, essential questions, knowledge, and skills for the unit. The content map will facilitate communication regarding the key concepts and vocabulary that will be the focus of the unit. The content map can be used in several different ways to support instruction. For example, on a daily basis, teachers can have students look at the content map to connect what they have learned and preview what is next; ask students to color in related concepts to support memory; use the content map as a prompt for a writing activity or essay question; or use content map for a review of unit tests.

The development of the content map will require the co-teachers to take an in-depth look at the enduring understandings, essential questions, knowledge, and skills that have been identified for the unit. Based on this analysis and on student needs, co-teachers can then determine which students will need accommodations or modifications for the unit.

Phase II: Differentiate Assessment. Using the assessments that have been developed for the unit, co-teachers must decide in what ways the design/format should be adjusted to support students with disabilities. The IEP should always be referred to for the purpose of alignment.

Phase III. Differentiate Instruction, Materials, and Learning Activities. Using the instruction, materials, and learning activities that have been developed in the unit plan, co-teachers must determine what adaptations are required to meet the needs of all students in the class. Specialized instruction must be considered for students with disabilities in order to ensure access to the content. Such support should include an emphasis on the following aspects of instruction:

- □ Content preview/review
- □ Vocabulary development
- □ Concept connections
- □ Writing development
- □ Reading skills
- □ Math computations and application
- □ Organization skills

Questions to be considered when differentiating instruction, materials and activities:

1. What different instructional approach should be considered for students with deficits in visual, auditory, tactile, or kinesthetic processing?
2. What different activities can be developed to assist students with processing deficits?
3. What assistive technology is required to meet the needs of the students?
4. What are some alternative activities based on the student's processing deficits?

Phase IV: Determine the Co-Teaching Approach to Implement Daily Lesson Plan. The next step is to determine the approach that will be used for each instructional activity.

Questions to consider when choosing a co-teaching approach:

1. What level of expertise does each co-teacher need for the instruction?
2. What are the needs of the students in the class as related to the instruction?
3. What are the classroom and other environmental considerations for this activity?
4. What type of grouping will best meet the needs of the students for the activity?

Phase V: Determine Roles and Responsibilities of Co-Teachers. The last step for co-teachers is to decide which teacher will take the lead in providing for each component of the instructional activity and how the other teacher will provide support. Considerations of knowledge of the content, comfort, and interest level should direct these decisions. In addition to deciding who will instruct what part of the content of the lesson, teachers must consider who will develop materials, facilitate the use of technology, adapt assessments, and provide targeted support.

Co-teaching presents challenges and opportunities for both teachers. Commitment to on-going professional development must be embraced in order to improve the art and ensure positive learning outcomes for students.

Level III: Weekly Planning

Co-teachers should carve out some time weekly to reflect on the "teaching and learning" of the class. These reflections should include what worked and did not work, what needs to be done differently, and what changes, if any, are needed for improved instruction and learning.

Co-Planning

Co-teaching requires thoughtful planning which, when used in connection with co-teaching, is known as ***co-planning***. In co-planning, both teachers contribute to the planning stage. Through co-planning both teachers reach an agreement before instruction regarding which teacher will be responsible for what activity and for what materials, and both teachers agree to talk openly with each other after the class to evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson (Trites, 2009).

Effective Classroom-Level Planning

Walther-Thomas, Bryant & Land (1996) note, "When co-teaching, teachers really want to present themselves as a unified front!" A united front can be seen when:

- Co-teachers show a shared commitment and enthusiasm
- All meetings/correspondences with families are reflective of both co- teachers
- Each teacher trusts the professional skills of his or her partners
- Learning environments demand active involvement
- Learning environments are reflective of everyone's contributions
- Effective routines are in place to facilitate planning
- Planning skills and instructional quality improve over time

SECTION VI. Student Support Teams

The Student Support Team (SST) process is designed to provide support to the student and teacher through a collaborative approach. The goal of the SST is to bring together a team of individuals who come together to assess the reasons a student who is having difficulty in school and develop a plan to address the areas of difficulty. SSTs can be a valuable tool in providing for an effective educational program for students.

For LEAs with school-wide intervention models, such as RtI or PBIS, the SST is typically found at Tier II of the model, and is the primary structure for developing targeted support plans for individual students or small groups of students for whom school-wide and Tier I classroom interventions have not worked. For this reason, SST teams are most effective when they are comprised of both teachers and student support specialists (social worker, psychologist, attendance/truancy officer) as well as the parents and students themselves as appropriate.

The SST process involves six basic steps that focus on individual student needs, learning styles, program effectiveness, and home/school communication (Georgia Department of Education, 2008). These steps are as follows:

1. **Information Gathering.** Prior to and during the first meeting, team members gather as much information as possible regarding the student's past and present educational/behavioral performance this may include conducting a functional behavior assessment).
2. **Assessment and/or Evaluation of Data.** The team meets to discuss and interpret the information available to them. At this point, the team will assess if more information is needed and how to obtain it.
3. **Development of Educational Plan.** After reviewing the information provided, and if deemed appropriate, the team may develop an individual educational plan specific for the student. A timeline for follow-up and evaluation is also discussed and agreed upon.
4. **Implementation of Educational Plan.** The educational plan is implemented for a specific time period.
5. **Progress Monitoring.** The SST reconvenes to discuss progress and any additional data. Depending on the progress of the student, the plan can change.
6. **Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation.** The SST monitors student progress and makes changes to the plan as is necessary.

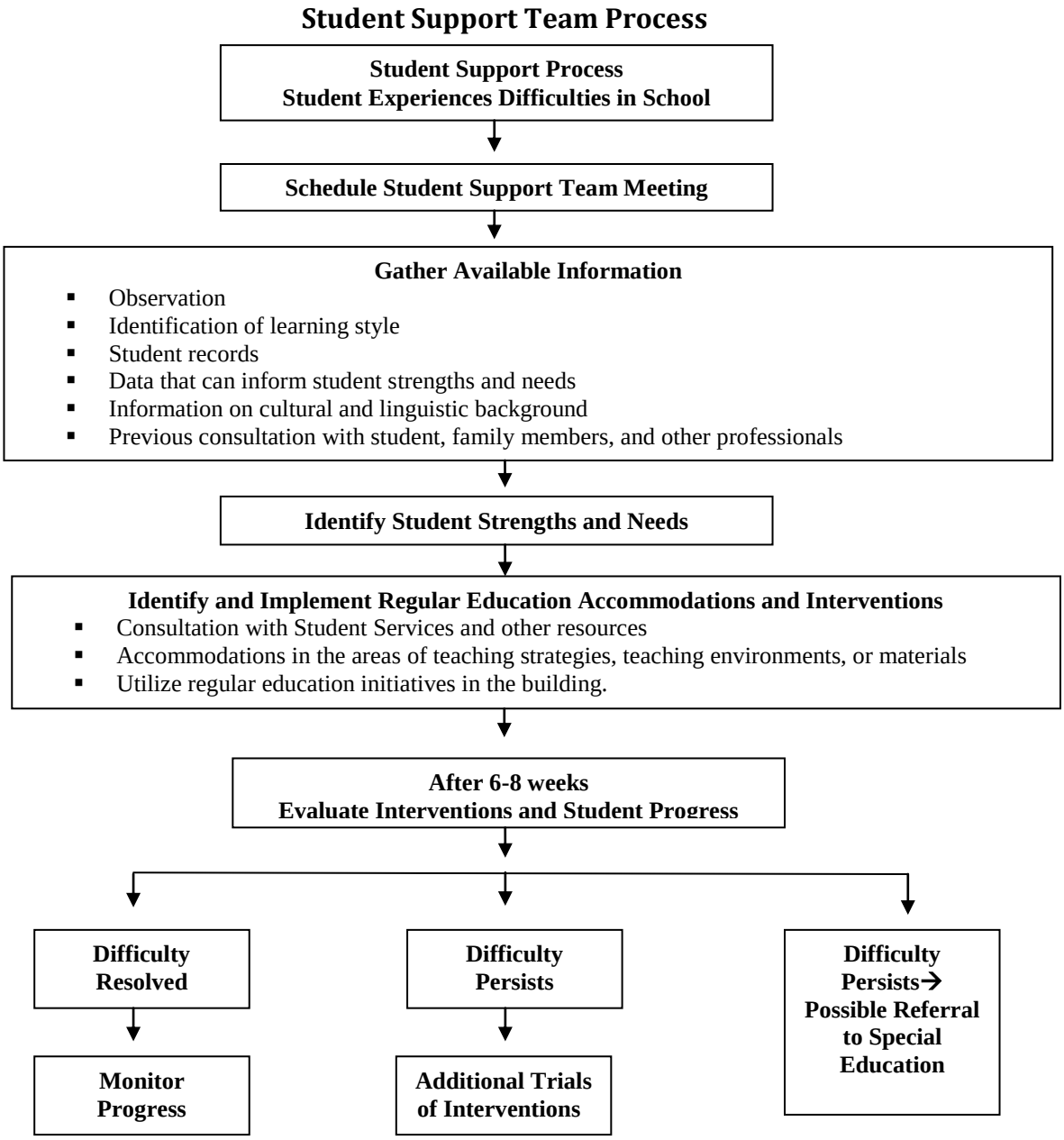

Figure 2.7. Adapted from the Amherst, Pelham & Amherst-Regional Schools, Student Support Team Process Manual, 2007

SECTION VII. Chapter II Appendices

A2-1. Diversity Self-Assessment

- What is my definition of diversity?
- Do the children in my classroom and school come from diverse cultural backgrounds?
- What are my perceptions of student from different racial or ethnic groups? With language or dialects different from mine? With special needs?
- What are the sources of these perceptions (e.g., friends, relative television, movies)?
- How do I respond to my students, based on these perceptions?
- Have I experienced others' making assumptions about me based on my membership in a specific group? How did I feel?
- What steps do I need to take to learn about the students from diverse backgrounds in my school and classroom?
- How often do social relationships develop among students from different racial or ethnic backgrounds in my classroom and in the school? What is the nature of these relationships?
- In what ways do I make my instructional program responsive to the needs of the diverse groups in my classroom?
- What kinds of information, skills, and resources do I need to acquire to effectively teach from a multicultural perspective?
- In what ways do I collaborate with other educators, family members, and community groups to address the needs of all my students?

Adapted from "Creating Culturally, Responsive, Inclusive Classrooms", Montgomery (2001)

A2-2. Co-Teaching: What it IS and What it is NOT

Elements of Co-Teaching	What Co-Teaching IS	What Co-Teaching is NOT
Two or More Professionals	Involves at least two credentialed professionals- indicating that co-teachers are peers having equivalent credentials and thus can truly be partners in the instructional effort. The general education curriculum provides an instructional framework and the professionals have the ability to modify the framework for students who require it (Fennick, 2001).	Does not involve a teacher and a classroom volunteer or paraprofessional, many of whom have not had the professional preparation to co-teach or been expected to serve the role as co-teacher. While paraprofessionals have important classroom roles, they should not be asked to fulfill responsibilities of certified staff (Friend & Cook, 2003).
Joint Delivery of Instruction	Both professionals coordinate and deliver substantive instruction and have active roles. Co-teachers work to ensure that their instructional strategies engage all students in ways that are not possible when only one teacher is present (Austin, 2001; Gately & Gately, 2001).	Two adults are merely present in a classroom at the same time, with the general educator planning and delivering all of the lessons while the special educator circulates. Co-teaching does not involve taking turns teaching to the whole group (Murawski, 2002).
Diverse Group of Students	Allows teachers to respond effectively to diverse needs of students, lowers the teacher-student ratio, and expands the professional expertise that can be applied to student needs (Hourcade & Bowens, 2001).	Separating or grouping students with special needs in one part of the classroom or along the fringes, even if these practices are well-intentioned (Friend & Cook, 2003).
Shared Classroom Space	Co-teachers instructing in the same physical space. Although small groups of students may occasionally be taken to a separate location for a specific purpose and limited time, co-teaching should generally take place in a single environment- separating it from the practice of regrouping for pullout programs (Friend & Cook, 2003).	Teaching teams that plan together and then group and instruct students in separate classrooms (Trump, 1966; Green, 1985).

Adapted from the Access Center "Improving Access to the General Curriculum for Students with Disabilities Through Collaborative Teaching"

A2-3. Differentiated Strategies

Differentiated Strategy	Primary Use	Description of Strategy	Things to Consider
Tiered Assignments and Products	Readiness	Assignments and products are designed to instruct and assess students on essential skills that are provided at different levels of complexity, abstractness, and open-endedness. The curricular content/objective(s) are the same, but the process/product varies according to the student's level of readiness. **Example:** Students with moderate understanding about a topic are asked to write an article. Students with more advanced understanding are asked to prepare a debate.	• Focus task on key concept • Use variety of resource materials at different levels of complexity w/ different learning modalities • Adjust task by complexity, abstractness, number of steps, and independence to ensure challenge
Compacting	Readiness	Compacting is the process of eliminating teaching or student practice due to previous mastery of learning objectives. It involves a 3-step process: assess the student to determine/her level of knowledge on the material and determine what he/she still needs to master; create plans for what the student needs to know, and excuse the student from studying what he/she already knows; create plans for freed-up time to be spent in enriched or accelerated study. **Example:** A 3rd grade class is learning to identify the parts of fractions. Diagnostics reveal that two students already know the information. These students are excused from related activities and are taught to add/subtract fractions.	• Thoroughly pre-assess the student's knowledge and document findings • Explain the process and its benefits to the student • Create written plans and timelines for study • Allow student choice in enrichment or accelerated study
Independent Study	Interest	The student and teacher identify topics of interest to the student. Together they plan a method of investigating the topic and decide upon the outcome of the independent study. The result of the project will be based on the needs of the student and the curricular content. Guided by the teacher, the student completes his/her own research on the topic and develops a product to share with classmates. **Example:** In a unit on ocean life a student indicates that she wants to learn more about sharks. With teacher's guidance she develops research questions, collects info, and presents a report on topic.	• Base project on student interest • Provide guidance and structure to ensure high standards of investigation and product • Use timelines to help student stay on track • Use process logs or expert journals to document the process • Establish clear criteria for success

Interest Centers	Interest	Interest centers (usually used w/younger students) and interest groups (usually used w/older learners) are set up so that learning experiences are directed toward a specific interest. They allow students to choose a topic and can be motivating to students. If they are used as enrichment, they can allow the study of topics beyond the general curriculum. Groups address student readiness when they are differentiated by level of complexity required. **Example:** In a Civil War unit, students can choose to work in groups on one of three topics: labor issues, biography of a prominent figure, or women's role	• Incorporate student interest • Encourage students to help create tasks and define products adjust for student readiness • Establish clear criteria for success • Adjust blocks of work time based on student readiness
Flexible Grouping	Interest, Readiness, Learning Profile	Students work as part of many different groups depending on the task and/or content. Sometimes students are placed in groups based on readiness; other times they are placed based on interest and/or learning profile. Groups can either be assigned by the teacher or chosen by the students. Students can be assigned purposefully to a group or assigned randomly. This strategy allows students to work with a variety of peers and keeps them from being labeled as advanced or struggling. **Example:** in a reading class, the teacher may assign groups based on readiness for phonics instruction, but allow students to choose their own groups of book reports, based on book topic.	• Ensure students have an opportunity to work w/ other students who are similar/ different in terms of interest, readiness, learning profile • Alternate assignments • Ensure students have been given the skills to work collaboratively • Provide clear guidelines for group functioning work
Multiple Levels of Questions	Readiness, Learning Profile	Teachers adjust the types of questions and the ways in which they are presented based on what is needed to advance problem-solving skills and responses. This strategy ensures that all students will be accountable for information and thinking at a high level and that all students will be challenged. Finally, all students benefit from this strategy because all can learn from a wide range of questions and responses. **Example:** The teacher prepares a list of questions about a topic that the whole class is studying. During a discussion, the teacher asks initial questions to specific students based on readiness. All students are encouraged to ask and answer follow-up questions.	• Wait before taking student answers • Adjust the complexity type of response necessary, and connections required between topics based on readiness and learning profile • Encourage students to build upon their own answers and the answers of other students

Adapted from The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners (Tomlinson, 1999).

A2-4. S.H.A.R.E.

Sharing Hopes, Attitudes, Responsibilities, and Expectations

Directions: Take a few minutes to individually complete this worksheet. Be honest in your responses. After completing it individually, share the responses with your co-teaching partner by taking turns reading the responses. Do not use this time to comment on your partner's responses—merely read. After reading through the responses, take a moment or two to jot down any thoughts you have regarding what your partner has said. Then, come back together and begin to share reactions to the responses. Your goal is to either (a) Agree, (b) Compromise, or (c) Agree to Disagree.

1. Right now, the main hope I have regarding this co-teaching situation is:
2. My attitude/philosophy regarding teaching students with disabilities in a general education classroom is:
3. I would like to have the following responsibilities in a co-taught classroom:
4. I would like my co-teacher to have the following responsibilities:
5. I have the following expectations in a classroom:
    a. Regarding discipline:
    b. Regarding class work:
    c. Regarding materials:
    d. Regarding homework:
    e. Regarding planning:
    f. Regarding modifications for individual students:
    g. Regarding grading:
    h. Regarding noise level:
    i. Regarding cooperative learning:
    j. Regarding giving/receiving feedback:
    k. Other important expectations I have:

A2-5. When to Use the Student Support Team Process

A team should consider implementing the Student Support Team (SST) process when a student:

- ✓ Exhibits behaviors that cause parent concerns
- ✓ Is considered for expulsion or has multiple suspensions
- ✓ Is being considered for retention
- ✓ Shows a pattern of not benefiting from informal accommodations
- ✓ Is identified as "at risk" or shows the potential of dropping out of school
- ✓ Consistently needs more time than most students to complete assignments
- ✓ Regularly needs testing with accommodations to demonstrate knowledge
- ✓ Frequently exhibits behavior that significantly interferes with school performance, such as inattentiveness or impulsiveness associated with an impairment
- ✓ Is chronically absent or late
- ✓ Has shown a steady decline in academic performance, for which there is no known cause
- ✓ Has experienced a steady increase in disciplinary problems with no explanation

Adapted from the Amherst, Pelham & Amherst-Regional Schools, Student Support Team Process Manual, 2007

CHAPTER III: Accommodations, Modifications & Assistive Technology

Goal:

- Accommodations, modifications, and assistive technology will be used by individualized education program (IEP) teams to provide students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum and the opportunity to become proficient on grade level standards.

Understandings:

- Accommodations do not change the "what" that students learn; they address the "how" they will access the information.
- Often the terms "accommodations and modifications" are used interchangeably; however, these terms are not synonymous.
- The overuse of modifications to the general education curriculum will not provide students with disabilities the skills needed to be proficient on high-stakes testing or master grade level standards. If modifications are not adjusted in response to skill development, they can cause learned helplessness.

Essential Question(s):

- How can we ensure that students with disabilities are able to access the general education curriculum?
- How can we ensure that IEP teams are selecting the appropriate accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities?

Skills and Knowledge:

IEP teams/teachers will:

- Know various types of accommodations, modifications, and assistive technology devices that will assist students with disabilities with accessing the general education curriculum.
- Align appropriate accommodations with specific learning challenges.
- Use the same accommodations and modifications that are used to provide access during instruction and testing.

Key Terms

Assistive Technology (AT)/ Assistive Technology Service (ATS)

Accommodations

Modifications

Overview

Accommodations, modifications, and assistive technology are an integral part of planning the educational program for students with disabilities. Many students may need only small changes in the way they are taught and tested. Careful consideration should be given to specific accommodations and modifications required. In addition, student skill acquisition should be closely monitored and modifications should be adjusted as they are no longer needed, to avoid the development of "learned helplessness."

Often the terms accommodation and modifications are used synonymously. It is important to be able to distinguish between accommodations and modifications. An **accommodation** is a change that helps a student overcome or work around a disability. Allowing a student who has trouble writing to give his answers orally is an example of an accommodation. This student is still expected to know the same material and answer the same questions as fully as the other students, but he or she does not have to write his answers to show that he or she knows the information.

By contrast, a **modification** is a change in what is being taught to, or expected from, the student. Making an assignment easier, so that the student is not doing the same level of work as other students, is an example of a modification.

SECTION I. Accommodations

The use of accommodations provides students with disabilities access to the general curriculum and the ability to acquire a regular high school diploma. Accommodations can be provided for instructional methods and materials, assignments and assessments, learning environments, time demands and scheduling, and special communication systems. Accommodations are made to the way students learn and how they are tested.

Standards and goals for learning in school do not have to change when accommodations are used. Students with disabilities can be challenged to meet the same requirements as students without disabilities. With appropriate accommodations, most students with disabilities can take the same tests, pass the same kind of courses, and earn the same high grades as students without disabilities.

Typically, use of accommodations does not begin and end in school. Students who use accommodations will generally also need them at home, in the community, and, as they get older, in postsecondary education and at work. Students with disabilities should know what accommodations they require to be successful in the general curriculum.

Accommodations Categories for Students with Disabilities

Accommodations for students with disabilities are commonly categorized in four ways: presentation, response, setting, and timing/scheduling:

- **Presentation Accommodations**: Accommodations that allow students to access information in ways that do not require them to visually read standard print. These alternate modes of access are auditory, multi-sensory, tactile, and visual.
- **Response Accommodations:** Accommodations that allow students to complete activities, assignments, and assessments in different ways or to solve/organize problems using some type of assistive device or organizer.
- **Setting Accommodations:** Change in location in which a test or assignment is given or the conditions of the assessment setting.
- **Timing and Scheduling Accommodations**: Accommodations that allow an increase in the length of time allotted to complete an assessment/assignment and/or change the way the time is organized.

Generally students will need the same accommodations for both classroom and standardized tests, if they are approved. Accommodations that are used with the State-approved standardized test must be consistent with what is stated in OSSE's testing manual as a state-approved accommodation.

SECTION II. Modifications

As noted in OSSE's Testing Accommodations Manual (2009), modifications are adaptations to practices that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations. For this reason, modifications can increase the gap between the achievement of students with disabilities and expectations related to proficiency at a particular grade level. While modifications may be appropriate, long-term use of modifications without assessing their effectiveness and impact could adversely affect students throughout their educational career. Examples of modifications include:

- Requiring a student to learn less material;
- Reducing assignments and assessments so that a student only needs to complete the easiest problems or items;
- Revising assignments/assessments to make them easier (e.g., providing half of the response choices on a test so that a student only has to pick from two options); or
- Giving a student hints or clues to correct responses on assignments and tests.

The IEP team should look at the student's present level of performance and educational needs to decide what kinds of accommodations and modifications are needed. It is

important to make an effort to use modifications only when necessary. The overuse of modifications will greatly reduce the opportunity for students with disabilities to be successful in high stakes testing and to be prepared to earn a regular diploma. Providing modifications to students during classroom instruction and/or assessments may have the unintended consequences of reducing their opportunity to learn critical content. If students have not had access to critical, assessed content, they may be at risk for not meeting graduation requirements (OSSE's Testing Accommodations Manual, 2009).

Students with disabilities are expected to master grade-level standards and participate in State-approved testing to the greatest extent possible. OSSE has created policies and guidance documents to assist IEP teams in determining if a student with a disability should participate in the the State-approved assessment or the State approved alternate assessment. For more information see: http://www.osse.dc.gov/seo/frames.asp?doc=/seo/lib/seo/DC_Testing_Accommodations_Manual.pdf.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Involving Students in Selecting, Using, and Evaluating Accommodations

It is critical for students with disabilities to understand their disabilities and learn self-advocacy strategies for success in school and throughout life. Speaking out about preferences, particularly in the presence of "authority figures," may be a new role for students, one for which they need guidance and feedback. Teachers and other IEP team members can play a key role in working with students to advocate for themselves in the context of selecting, using, and evaluating accommodations.

The more that students are involved in the selection process, the more likely the accommodations will be used, especially as students reach adolescence and the desire to be more independent increases. Students need opportunities to learn which accommodations are most helpful for them, and then learn how to make certain those accommodations are provided in all of their classes and wherever they need them outside of school (OSSE's Testing Accommodations Manual, 2009).

SECTION III. Assistive Technology

The IDEA (2004) defines ***assistive technology (AT)*** as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a student with a disability." Additionally, IDEA defines ***assistive technology services (ATS)*** as any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an AT device. These services include:

- Evaluating the needs of a child with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the child in the child's customary environment;
- Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of AT devices;
- Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing AT devices;
- Coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with AT devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans/programs;
- Training or technical assistance for such child, or, where appropriate, the family of such child; and
- Training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing education and rehabilitation services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to, employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in, the major life functions of such child.

The purpose of this section of IDEA is to ensure that if a student with a disability needs technology in order to be able to learn, the school will (a) evaluate the student's technology needs, (b) acquire the necessary technology, (c) coordinate technology use with other therapies and interventions, and (d) provide training for the individual, the individual's family, and the school staff in the appropriate use of the technology.

As required by State and Federal law, IEP teams must ensure that AT has been considered "to provide meaningful **access** to the general curriculum"(IDEA, 2004) for all children with disabilities identified as needing special education, related services, and supplementary services and aides. AT encompasses a wide range of tools and techniques. It can include mobility devices such as walkers and wheelchairs, as well as hardware and software. AT promotes greater independence by enabling students with disabilities to perform tasks that they were formerly unable to accomplish, or had great difficulty accomplishing, by enhancing access to the content via technology that can assist them in accomplishing critical tasks.

AT eligibility requirements include the following components:

- AT must be provided by the LEA at no cost to the parent.
- AT must be determined on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the unique needs of each individual child.
- If determined by the IEP Team that AT is needed, and such AT is designated as either special education or a related service, the IEP must include a specific statement describing such service and the nature and amount of the service.
- If the IEP Team determines that an AT device is needed for home use for a student to receive a free and appropriate education, then technology must be provided.
- AT must be provided if it is determined that there is an identified educational need for a student that requires an AT device or service.

SECTION IV. Chapter III Appendices

A3-1. Fact Sheet 1: Presentation Accommodations

Presentation accommodations allow students to access instruction and assessments in ways that do not require them to visually read standard print. These alternate modes of access include auditory, tactile, visual, and a combination of auditory and visual accommodations.

Who Can Benefit from Presentation Accommodations?

Students who benefit most from presentation accommodations are those with print disabilities, defines as difficulty with or the inability to visually read, standard print because of a physical, sensory, or cognitive disability. Presentation accommodations include:

- Amplification Equipment
- Braille
- Assisted Reading of Comprehension Passages
- Reading of Entire Comprehension Passage
- Interpretation of Oral Directions
- Magnifying Glass
- Markers to Maintain Place
- Reading of Test Questions (Math, Science and Composition Only)
- Repetition of Directions
- Simplification of Oral Directions
- Translations of Words and Phrases (Math, Science and Composition Only)
- Large Print

Presentation Accommodations for Assessments

All accommodations that students receive on assessments must also be used for instructional purposes.

Amplification Equipment

Some students may require audio amplification devices in addition to hearing aids to increase clarity. Teachers may use an amplification system when working with students in situations that contain a great deal of ambient noise.

Braille Materials

A student may use a Braille version of the test if he/she has a visual impairment and routinely uses Braille materials in the classroom.

Interpretation of Directions

Some students will require interpretation of directions, either in sign language or in another language.

Magnifying Glass

Some students with visual impairments read regular print materials and enlarge the print by using magnification devices. These include eyeglass-mounted magnifiers, free standing or handheld magnifiers, enlarged computer monitors, or computers with screen enlargement programs. Some students also use closed circuit television (CCTV) to enlarge print and display printed material with various image enhancements on a screen.

Markers to Maintain Place

A student may use a blank place marker on the test and answer document. Examples include index cards, adhesive notes, etc.

Reading of Test Questions (Math, Science and Composition Only)

Some students will require the test questions read aloud. The questions may only be read verbatim with no indication as to the correct answer.

Repetition of Directions

Some students will require that directions be repeated to them. Directions should be repeated verbatim with no other information.

Simplification of Oral Directions

Some students will require simplification of direction. This may include changing a word or phrase, paraphrasing, or adding additional steps.

Translation of Work and Phrases (Math, Science and Composition Only)

Some students will need the oral translation of words and phrases. The translation should be as direct and precise as possible without providing additional assistance. If this accommodation is used for other tests besides math, science or composition, it is considered a modification.

Large Print

Large print editions of tests and instructional materials are required for some students with visual impairments. It is recommended that regular print materials be manipulated to reformat test items and enlarge or change the font as needed. All text and graphic materials, including labels and captions, diagrams, charts, notes, and footnotes, must be presented in at least 18-point type for students who need large print. Students and their teachers need to find an optimal print size and

determine the smallest print that can still be read. It is important for the print to be clear, with high contrast between the color of the print and the color of the background. When using large-print material, consider the weight, size, and ability for the student to physically manage books.

Accommodations for Instructional Purposes ONLY

Assisted Reading of Comprehension Passages

A student may need assistance reading the comprehension passages. This accommodation is allowed for instruction only. When used as an assessment accommodation, it is considered a modification of the test.

Reading of Entire Comprehension Test

A student may need reading of the entire comprehension test. This accommodation is allowed for instruction only. When used as an assessment accommodation, it will be considered a modification of the test.

NOTE: Accommodations used for assessment that change the construct of what is being tested will be considered modifications and will invalidate the scores of the assessment for the purpose of calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Adapted from Thompson, S.J, Morse, A.B., Sharpe, M, and Hall, S.(2005). *A Guide to Selecting, Administering, and Evaluating the Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

A3-2. Fact Sheet 2: Response Accommodations

Response accommodations allow students to complete assignments, tests, and activities in different ways or to solve/organize problems using some type of assistive device or organizer.

Who Can Benefit from Response Accommodations?

Response accommodations can benefit students with physical, sensory, or learning disabilities (including difficulties with memory, sequencing, directionality, alignment, and organization).

Response accommodations include:

- Signed and/or Taped Responses
- Oral Response to Tests
- Written Response in Test Books
- Pointing Response
- Dictated Response to Examiner
- Calculators
- Pencil Grip

Response Accommodations for Assessments

All accommodations that students receive on the assessment must also be used for instructional purposes.

Signed and/or Taped Responses

A student uses a tape recorder to record class work or test responses rather than writing on paper.

Oral Response to Tests

A student may give an oral response to the multiple choice sections of the test with a scribe filling in the answers on a bubble sheet that can be scanned. The scribe must fill in the answer the student gives orally without giving an indication as to whether the answer is correct or incorrect. This person should follow the guidelines outlined below under scribe.

Written Response in Test Books

A student is permitted to write directly in a test booklet rather than on an answer sheet (e.g. bubble sheet).

Pointing Response

Students may point to a response with a scribe filling in the answer on a bubble answer sheet that can be scanned. The scribe must fill in the answer the student points to without giving any other assistance. This person should follow the guidelines outlined below as a scribe.

Dictated Response to Examiner

Student indicates a response to a scribe, who writes down what a student dictates by use of an assistive communication device, pointing, sign language, or speech. Much skill is involved in being a scribe, skill that requires extensive practice. A scribe may not edit or alter student work in any way and must record word for word exactly what the student has dictated. Scribes should request clarification from the student about the use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling key words, and must allow the student to review and edit what the scribe has written. Individuals who serve as a scribe need to carefully prepare to ensure that they know the vocabulary involved and understand the boundaries of the assistance to be provided. The role of the scribe is to write only what is dictated.

Calculators

The State-approved assessment stipulates which grades and sections of the mathematics assessment may be completed with the aid of a calculator. In these instances only, students may use a calculator. While the SEA prefers that students use a standard four-function calculator, graphing calculators are permitted. Any programs and information that are not factory-installed on the calculator are not permitted on graphing calculators during test administration. The following items are not allowed for use as a calculator: laptop or portable/handheld computer, calculator with paper tape, electronic writing pad or pen-input/stylus-driven device, Pocket organizer, cell phone calculator.

Pencil Grip

Some students may need the assistance of a pencil grip. Pencil grips are a simple accommodation that can help a student with fine motor problems, hand shaking, tremors, or writing disabilities complete a task that requires a written response. Pencil grips are available in various shapes and sizes.

Accommodations for Instructional Purposes ONLY

Copying from Paper/Book Instead of Board

Students may copy from a paper or book instead of board. This is used for instructional purposes only because of the nature of the accommodation.

NOTE: Accommodations used for assessment that change the construct of what is being tested will be considered modifications and will invalidate the scores of the assessment for the purpose of calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Adapted from Thompson, S.J, Morse, A.B., Sharpe, M, and Hall, S.(2005). *A Guide to Selecting, Administering, and Evaluating the Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

A3-3. Fact Sheet 3: Setting Accommodations

Setting accommodations are accommodations that:

- change the location in which a student receives instruction or participates in an assessment or
- change the conditions of an instructional or assessment setting.

Students may be allowed to sit in a location that is different from the majority of students in order to reduce distractions to themselves or others, or to increase physical access or access to special equipment. Some students may need changes in the conditions of an instructional setting. Every instructional and assessment setting should have good lighting and ventilation, with a comfortable room temperature, and be as free as possible from noise, traffic, and other interruptions. Chairs should be comfortable and tables set at an appropriate height with sufficient room for materials. Staff should check that all needed materials and equipment are available and in good condition.

Who Can Benefit From Setting Accommodations?

Setting accommodations, which are changes in instructional and assessment locations, can benefit students who are easily distracted in large group settings and who concentrate best in a small group or individual setting. Changes in location also benefit students who receive accommodations (e.g. reader, scribe, frequent breaks) that might distract other students. Students with physical disabilities might need a more accessible location, specific room conditions, or special equipment.

Setting accommodations include:

- Adaptive or Special Furniture
- Individual Testing
- Locations with Minimal Distractions
- Noise Buffer
- Preferential Seating
- Small Group Testing
- Special Lighting

Setting Accommodations for Assessments

All accommodations students receive on the assessment must also be used for instructional purposes.

Adaptive or Special Furniture

Occasionally a setting might be changed to increase physical access for a student. For example, a student who uses a wheelchair with a specially designed tabletop and assistive technology may not have adequate space in an auditorium with theater seating. Other students may need equipment that requires specific locations for learning and assessment. For example, a student who uses a computer for word processing might need to complete

assignments and take tests in a computer lab. A student who uses large-print materials may need to sit at a table rather than at a desk with a small surface area. Another student might benefit from a standing work station. To increase access for students with visual or physical disabilities, keep aisles clear, and do not leave doors or cupboards half open. If a student has a guide dog, explain to other students that the dog is working and should be ignored. Make certain the school is accessible for students with mobility impairments. Students should have access to the building, cafeteria, classrooms, media center, restrooms, and playground. In essence, they should be able to access any room or space on the school grounds used by students in general. Some students may need to receive educational services and participate in assessments in home or hospital settings.

Individual Testing

A student may receive an individual administration. A trained test administrator must be present in the testing room at all times.

Location with Minimal Distractions

A setting accommodation to minimize distractions would allow a student to do individual work or take tests in a different location, usually in a place with few or no other students. Changes may also be made to a student's location within a room. For example, a student who is easily distracted may not want to sit near windows, doors, or pencil sharpeners. Sitting near the teacher's desk or in the front of a classroom may be helpful for some students. Physically enclosed classrooms (classrooms with four walls) may be more appropriate than open classrooms, and study carrels might also be helpful for students who are easily distracted.

Noise Buffer

Some students concentrate best while wearing noise buffers such as earphones, earplugs, or headphones.

Preferential Seating

Students can be given preferential seating that will give students the best opportunity to concentrate on the assessment and stay focused on the task.

Small Group Testing

A student may be tested in a small group. A trained test administrator must be present in the testing room at all times. The State does not define how many students constitute a small-group administration. Groupings for this accommodation should be based on student need and, in all cases, should be smaller than the number of students in a

traditional testing room.

Special Lighting

Students with low vision may prefer to sit in the part of a room that has the best light.

NOTE: Accommodations used for assessment that change the construct of what is being tested will be considered modifications and will invalidate the scores of the assessment for the purpose of calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Adapted from Thompson, S.J, Morse, A.B., Sharpe, M, and Hall, S.(2005). *A Guide to Selecting, Administering, and Evaluating the Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

A3-4. Fact Sheet 4: Timing and Scheduling Accommodations

Timing and scheduling accommodations change the allowable length of time to complete assignments, assessments, and activities, and may also change the way the time is organized. Timing accommodations give students the time and the breaks they need to complete activities, assignments, and assessments. Other changes may include the particular time of day, day of the week, or number of days over which a particular activity, assignment, or assessment takes place.

Who Can Benefit From Timing and Scheduling Accommodations?

Timing and scheduling accommodations are most helpful for students who need more time than generally allowed to complete activities, assignments, and assessments. Extra time may be needed to process written text (e.g., a student with a learning disability who processes information slowly), to write (e.g., a student with limited dexterity as a result of arthritis), or to use other accommodations or equipment (e.g., assistive technology, audiotape, scribe).

Students who cannot concentrate continuously for an extended period or who become frustrated or experience stress easily may need frequent or extended relaxation breaks. It may also help to schedule in the morning those classes and tests that require the greatest concentration for students who have difficulty concentrating and staying on task as the day progresses.

Scheduling changes might also be helpful for students who are taking medications that affect their ability to stay alert or who have more productive times of the day.

Some students with health-related disabilities may have functioning levels that vary during the day because of the effects of medications or diminishing energy levels. For example, blood sugar levels may need to be maintained by eating several times a day at prescribed times. These students could be accommodated by scheduling tests and activities around the eating schedule, or by allowing food to be taken to the classroom or testing site. Students who fatigue easily may need to take some academic classes and tests before, rather than after, a physical education class or recess, or may need to reduce physical activity. Timing and scheduling accommodations include:

- Flexible Scheduling
- Test Administered at Best Time of the Day for Student
- Breaks Between Subtests
- Extended Time on Subtests
- Breaks During a Subtest

Timing and Scheduling Accommodation for Assessments

All accommodations that students receive on the assessment must also be used for instructional purposes.

Flexible Scheduling

If possible, schedule assessments and activities that require focused attention at the time of day when a student is most likely to demonstrate peak performance. Sometimes students are allowed to complete activities and take tests over multiple days—completing a portion each day. This is usually done to reduce fatigue.

Test Administered at Best Time of Day for Student

Same as "Flexible Scheduling" (see bullet above).

Breaks Between Subtests

Breaks may be given at predetermined intervals or after completion of assignments, tests, or activities. Sometimes a student is allowed to take breaks when individually needed. Sometimes test booklets are divided into shorter sections so students can take a break between sections of a test (sometimes referred to as "short segment test booklets"). If the length of a break is predetermined, a timer might be used to signal the end of the break.

Extended Time on Subtests

Extended time may require a student's IEP team to determine a fairly specific amount of extra time to complete assignments, projects, and assessments. For timed tests, a standard extension may be time and one half. This means that a student is allowed 90 minutes to take a test that normally has a 60-minute limit. Double time may also be allowed. Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the type of accommodations being provided, the disability involved, and the type of assignments, assessments, and activities being administered. Usually "unlimited" time is not appropriate or feasible. Sometimes students who request extended time end up not needing it because of the reduction in anxiety of simply knowing that plenty of time is available. Students who have too much time may lose interest and motivation to do their best work.

NOTE: Accommodations used for assessment that change the construct of what is being tested will be considered modifications and will invalidate the scores of the assessment for the purpose of calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Adapted from Thompson, S.J, Morse, A.B., Sharpe, M, and Hall, S.(2005). *A Guide to Selecting, Administering, and Evaluating the Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

A3-5. Fact Sheet 5: Examples of Accommodations Based on Student Characteristics

Student Characteristic: Blind, Low Vision, Partial Sight		
Category	**Accommodations to Consider for Instruction**	**Accommodations to Consider for Assessments**
Presentation	• Large print • Magnification devices • Braille/Nemeth Braille code • Tactile graphics • Human reader • Audiotape or compact disk (CD) • Screen reader • Large print or Braille notes, outlines • Descriptive video • Talking materials	• Large print • Magnification devices • Braille/Nemeth Braille code • Tactile graphics • Audiotape or CD • Screen reader
Response	• Expression of response to a scribe through speech • Response typed on or spoken into word processor • Response typed on Brailler • Tape recorder • Use of calculation devices (e.g., talking calculator with enlarged keys) • Use personal note taker	• Expression response to a scribe through speech • Response typed on or spoken into word processor • Response typed on Brailler • Tape recorder • Use of calculation devices (e.g., talking calculator with enlarged keys)
Setting	• Change in location for minimal distraction • Change in location to increase physical access • Change in location to access special equipment	• Change in location for minimal distraction • Change in location to increase physical access • Change in location to access special equipment
Timing & Scheduling	• Extended Time	• Extended Time
Student Characteristic: Deaf, Hard of Hearing		
Category	**Accommodations to Consider for Instruction**	**Accommodations to Consider for Assessments**
Presentation	• Sign language • Audio amplification devices • Screen reader • Visual cues • Written notes, outlines, and instructions • Videotape and descriptive video • Provision of advanced organizers and outlines of lectures for student to follow • Use of gestures (e.g., pointing to materials) • Repetition of questions and responses from classmates • Use of notes copied from classmate • Use of captioned versions of instructional films and include script when possible • Provision of instructional materials to interpreter in advance • Use of manual signs and taught to all students • Permission for student to use telecommunication device • Facing student when speaking, speaking to student and not to interpreter, and increasing wait time for interpreter to finish	• Sign language • Audio amplification devices • Screen reader
Response	• Response expressed to scribe or interpreter	• Response expressed to scribe or interpreter

	• Response typed on or spoken into word processor • Use of spelling and grammar assistive devices • Use of visual organizers • Use of graphic organizers	• Response typed on or spoken into word processor • Use of spelling/grammar assistive devices • Use of visual organizers • Use of graphic organizers
Setting	• Change in location to reduce distractions • Change in location to increase physical access (e.g. to minimize background noise)	• Change in location to reduce distractions • Change in location to increase physical access (e.g. to minimize background noise)
Student Characteristic: Weak Manual Dexterity; Difficulty w/ Pencil; Difficulty Typing on Standard Keyboard		
Category	**Accommodations to Consider for Instruction**	**Accommodations to Consider for Assessments**
Response	• Response expressed to a scribe through speech, pointing or by using assistive communication device • Response typed on or spoken into word processor • Tape recorder • Use of thick pencil or pencil grip • Use of written notes, outlines, and instructions	• Response expressed to a scribe through speech, pointing or by using assistive communication device • Response typed on or spoken into word processor • Tape recorder • Use of thick pencil or pencil grip
Student Characteristic: Communication Disorder		
Category	**Accommodations to Consider for Instruction**	**Accommodations to Consider for Assessments**
Presentation	• Screen reader	• Screen reader
Student Characteristic: Reading Disability; Difficulty Decoding		
Category	**Accommodations to Consider for Instruction**	**Accommodations to Consider for Assessments**
Presentation	• Human reader • Audiotape or CD • Screen reader • Videotape	• Audiotape or CD • Screen reader
Setting	• Change in location minimal/no distract others • Use of written notes, outlines, and instructions	• Change in location for minimal/no distractions
Student Characteristic: Writing Disability; Difficulty with Spelling		
Category	**Accommodations to Consider for Instruction**	**Accommodations to Consider for Assessments**
Response	• Response expressed to a scribe through speech • Response typed on or spoken into word processor • Tape recorder • Use of spelling and grammar assistive devices (e.g. electronic spelling device, spell check on computer) • Use of written notes, outlines, and instructions	• Response expressed to a scribe through speech • Response typed on or spoken into word processor • Tape recorder • Use of spelling and grammar assistive devices (e.g. electronic spelling device, spell check on computer)
Student Characteristic: Mathematics Disability		
Category	**Accommodations to Consider for Instruction**	**Accommodations to Consider for Assessments**
Response	• Calculation devices • Visual organizers • Graphic organizers • Math tables and formula sheets	• Calculation devices • Visual organizers • Graphic organizers
Student Characteristic: Physical Disability		
Category	**Accommodations to Consider for Instruction**	**Accommodations to Consider for Assessments**
Response	• Response expressed to a scribe through speech, pointing or by using assistive communication device • Response typed on or spoken into word	• Response expressed to a scribe through speech, pointing or by using assistive communication device • Response typed on or spoken into word

	processor • Tape recorder • Response written in test booklet instead of answer sheet • Use of augmentative devices for single or multiple messages (e.g. Dynovox) • Use of written notes, outlines, and instructions	processor • Tape recorder • Response written in test booklet instead of answer sheet • Use of augmentative devices for single or multiple messages (e.g. Dynovox)
Setting	• Change in location to increase physical access • Change in location to access special equipment	• Change in location to increase physical access • Change in location to access special equipment
Timing & Scheduling	• Extended Time • Multiple or frequent breaks	• Extended Time • Multiple or frequent breaks
Student Characteristic: Easily Distracted; Short Attention Span		
Category	**Accommodations to Consider for Instruction**	**Accommodations to Consider for Assessments**
Presentation	• Use of books on tape or recorded books • Provision of short and simple directions with examples	
Response	• Response written in test booklet instead of on answer sheet • Monitoring of placement of student responses on answer sheet • Use of materials or devices used to solve or organize responses • Use of visual organizers • Use of graphic organizers • Highlighting of key words in directions • Request for student to repeat and explain directions to check for understanding • Use of template • Use of graph paper to keep numbers in proper columns	• Response written in test booklet instead of on answer sheet • Monitoring of placement of student responses on answer sheet • Use of materials or devices used to solve or organize responses • Use of visual organizers • Use of graphic organizers • Highlighting of key words in directions • Request for student to repeat and explain directions to check for understanding • Use of template • Use of graph paper to keep numbers in proper columns
Setting	• Seating in front of room • Change in location to reduce distractions	• Seating in front of room • Change in location to reduce distractions
Timing & Scheduling	• Use of short segment test booklets • Provision of multiple or frequent breaks • Scheduling of tests in the morning • Use of cues to student to begin working and stay on task • Change in testing schedule or order of subtests • Limited reading periods • Schedule of activities requiring more seat time in the morning and more hands-on and physical activities in the afternoon • Division of long-term assignments	• Use of short segment test booklets • Provision of multiple or frequent breaks • Scheduling of tests in the morning • Use of cues to student to begin working and stay on task • Change in testing schedule or order of subtests

Adapted from Thompson, S.J, Morse, A.B., Sharpe, M, and Hall, S.(2005). *A Guide to Selecting, Administering, and Evaluating the Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

A3-6. Fact Sheet 6: Do's and Don'ts When Selecting Accommodations

Do's	Dont's
Do make accommodations decisions based on individualized needs and present performance.	Don't make accommodations decisions based on whatever is easiest to do (e.g. preferential seating).
Do select accommodations that reduce the impact of the disability on accessing instruction and demonstrating learning.	Don't select accommodations that are unrelated to documented student learning needs or are intended to give students an unfair advantage.
Do be certain to document instructional and assessment accommodations on the IEP.	Don't use an accommodation that has not been documented on the IEP.
Do be familiar with the types of accommodations that can be used as both instructional and assessment accommodations.	Don't assume that all instructional accommodations are appropriate for use on assessments.
Do be specific about the where, when, who, and how of providing accommodations.	Don't simply indicate that an accommodation will be provided "as appropriate" or "as necessary."
Do refer to state accommodations policies and understand implications of selections.	Don't check every accommodation possible on a checklist simply to be "safe."
Do evaluate accommodations used by the student.	Don't assume the same accommodations remain appropriate year after year.
Do get input about accommodations from teachers, parents, and students, and use it to make decisions at IEP team meetings.	Don't make decisions about instructional and assessment accommodations alone.
Do provide accommodations for assessments routinely used for classroom instruction.	Don't provide an assessment accommodation for the first time on the day of a test.
Do select accommodations based on specific individual needs in each content area.	Don't assume certain accommodations, such as extra time, are appropriate for every student in ever content area.

Adapted from Thompson, S.J, Morse, A.B., Sharpe, M, and Hall, S.(2005). *A Guide to Selecting, Administering, and Evaluating the Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

A3-7. Tool 1: Identifying Student Needs that May Require Accommodations

Use these questions to identify various types of presentation, response, setting, and timing and scheduling accommodations for students with disabilities. The list is not exhaustive—its purpose is to prompt members of IEP teams to consider a wide range of accommodation needs. Use the list in planning by indicating Y (YES), N (NO), or DK/NA (Don't Know or Not Applicable).

Presentation Accommodations (If Answered yes, see A4.1- Fact Sheet 1: Presentation Accommodations)

1. Does the student have a visual impairment that requires large-type or Braille materials? ___
2. Is the student able to read and understand directions? ___
3. Can the student follow oral direction from an adult or audiotape? ___
4. Does the student need directions repeated frequently? ___
5. Are assistive technology devices indicated on the student's IEP? ___
6. Has the student been identified as having a reading disability? ___
7. Does the student have low or poor reading skills that may require the reading of tests or sections of tests that do not measure reading comprehension in order to demonstrate knowledge of subject areas? ___
8. Does the student have a hearing impairment that requires an interpreter to sign directions? ___
9. Does the student have a hearing impairment and need a listening device? ___

Response Accommodations (If answered yes, see A4.2- Fact Sheet 2: Response Accommodations)

10. Does the student have difficulty tracking from one page to another and maintaining his or her place? ___
11. Does the student have a disability that affects the ability to record his or her responses in the standard manner? ___
12. Can the student use a pencil or writing instrument? ___
13. Does the student use a word processor to complete homework assignments or tests? ___
14. Does the student use a tape recorder to complete assignments or tests? ___
15. Does the student need the services of a scribe? ___
16. Does the student have a disability that affects his or her ability to spell? ___
17. Does the student have a visual or motor disability that affects his or her ability to perform math computations? ___

Setting Accommodations (If answered yes, see A4.3- Fact Sheet 3: Setting Accommodations)

18. Do others easily distract the student or does that student have difficulty remaining on task? ___
19. Does the student require any specialized equipment or other accommodations that may be distracting to others? ___
20. Does the student have visual or auditory impairments that require special lighting or acoustics? ___
21. Can the student focus on the student's own work in a stetting with large groups of other students? ___
22. Does the student exhibit behaviors that may disrupt the attention of other students? ___
23. Do any physical accommodations need to be made for the student in the classroom? ___

Timing & Scheduling Accommodations (If answered yes, see A4.4- Fact Sheet 4: Timing and Scheduling Accommodations)

24. Can the student work continuously for the length of time allocated for standard test administration? ___
25. Does the student use other accommodations or adaptive equipment that require more time to complete test items (e.g. Braille, scribe, use of head point to type)? ___
26. Does the student tire easily due to a health impairment? ___
27. Does the student have a visual impairment that causes eye strain and require frequent breaks? ___
28. Does the student have a learning disability that affects the rate at which he/she processes written information? ___
29. Does the student have a motor disability that affects the rate at which he/she writes responses? ___
30. Does the student take any type of medication to facilitate optimal performance? ___
31. Does the student's attention span or distractibility require shorter working periods and frequent breaks? ___

Adapted from Thompson, S.J, Morse, A.B., Sharpe, M, and Hall, S.(2005). *A Guide to Selecting, Administering, and Evaluating the Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

A3-8. Tool 2: Accommodations from the Student's Perspective

Use this questionnaire to collect information about needed accommodations from the student's perspective. The questions can be completed independently or as part of an interview process. Whatever method is used, be certain that the student understands the concept of an "accommodation," providing examples as necessary.

1. Think about all the classes you are taking now. Which is your best class?
2. Explain what you do well in this class.

The things you said you can do well above are your strengths. For example, you may have mentioned reading, writing, listening, working in groups, working alone, drawing, or doing your homework as some things you can do well. If you said you really like the subject, have a good memory, and work hard in class, these are also examples of your strengths.

3. Now ask yourself, "What class is hardest?"
4. What's the hardest part of this class for you?

The things you said were hardest are areas you need to work on during the school year. For example, you might have listed paying attention in class, reading the book, taking tests, listening, staying in the seat, remembering new information, doing homework, or doing work in groups. These are all things in which an accommodation may be helpful for you.

5. In the list that follows, write down all of the classes you are taking now. Then look at a list of accommodations. Next to each class, write down what accommodation(s) you think might be helpful for you.

Class List

Classes		Accommodations
_____ _____		_____ _____

This questionnaire was adapted from A Student's Guide to the IEP by the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (http://nichcy.org/pubs/stuguide/st1book.htm). Retrieved July 28, 2005.

A3-9. Tool 3: Assessment Accommodations Plan

Student Information		**Case Information**
Name: _____		Special Education Teacher/Case Manager: _____
Date of Assessment: _____		Building/School Year: _____
Name of Assessment: _____		General Education Teacher: _____

Accommodations/Date Arranged:

1._____ /_____

2._____ /_____

Comments:

_____

_____

Person(s) Responsible for Arranging Accommodations:

1._____

2._____

Comments:

_____

_____

Room Assignment for Assessment_____

Planners for this Process
(Signatures):_____

Adapted from Scheiber, B., & Talpers, J. (1985). Campus Access for Learning Disabled Students: A Comprehensive Guide. Pittsburgh:Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities.

A3-10. Tool 4: Assessment Accommodations Agreement

This is an example of a form a student could carry on test day. This type of format puts the student in charge (building self-advocacy skills) and sets the expectation that, with these accommodations, students can show what they know on the test. Some accommodations (e.g., special test editions) need to be arranged long before test day but should still be included on this list to make certain the student receives the correct test booklet. A similar form could be carried to class to remind teachers about daily accommodations. Different schools, teachers, and students might format these statements differently. Note that it is the responsibility of the student to list the necessary accommodations and to present this list to the test administrator or teacher. This experience is particularly important for students with disabilities who intend to pursue a post-secondary education.

I, _____, (Student's name) need the following accommodations to take part in this assessment:

If I need more information about these accommodations, I can talk to:

_____

(Name of special education teacher, parent, principal, and/or related service provider)

Thank you for helping me to do my best on this test!

_____ _____

(Student signature) (Date)

Adapted from the DC OSSE Testing Accommodations Manual (October, 2009):
http://osse.dc.gov/seo/frames.asp?doc=/seo/lib/seo/DC_Testing_Accommodations_Manual.pdf

A3-11. Tool 5: Logistics Planning Checklist

Directions: This checklist can be used in the planning and implementation of assessment accommodations for individual students. Use the checklist by indicating Yes, No, or Not Applicable.

Accommodations throughout the Academic Year

1. Accommodations are documented on student's IEP ___
2. Student uses accommodations regularly and evaluates use ___
3. A master accommodations plan/data base listing assessments and accommodation needs for all students tested is updated regularly ___

Preparation for Test Day

4. Special test editions are ordered for students based on information contained in master accommodation plan ___
5. Test administrators/proctors receive a list of accommodations needs for students they will supervise (list comes from master accommodations plan) ___
6. Adult supervision is arranged and test administrators receive training for each student receiving accommodations in a small group or individual setting, including extended time (with substitutes available) ___
7. Trained readers, scribes and sign language interpreters are arranged for students (with substitutes available) ___
8. Special equipment is arranged and checked for correct operation ___

Accommodations on the Day of the Test

9. All eligible students receive accommodations as determined by their IEP ___
10. The provision of accommodations is recorded by test administrator ___
11. Substitute providers of accommodations are available as needed ___
12. Plans are made to replace defective equipment ___

Consideration after the Day of the Test

13. For students using special equipment, adapted test forms and/or response documents, responses are transferred to answer sheets that can be scanned ___
14. All equipments are returned to appropriate locations ___
15. Students who take make-up tests receive needed accommodations ___
16. Effectiveness of the accommodations used is evaluated by test administrators and students, and plans are made for improvement. ___

Adapted from the DC OSSE Testing Accommodations Manual (October, 2009):
http://osse.dc.gov/seo/frames.asp?doc=/seo/lib/seo/DC_Testing_Accommodations_Manual.pdf

A3-12. Tool 6: Accommodations Journal

One way to keep track of what accommodations work for a student is to support the student in keeping an "accommodations journal." The journal lets the student be "in charge" and could be kept up to date through regular consultation with a special education teacher or other staff member. Just think how much easier it would be for an IEP team to decide which accommodations to document on a student's IEP if the student came to the IEP meeting with a journal documenting all of these things: accommodations used by the student in the classroom and on tests; test and assignment results when accommodations are used and not used; the student's perception of how well an accommodation "works"; effective combinations of accommodations; difficulties related to accommodations use; and the perception of teachers and others about how each accommodation appears to be working.

In the spaces provided below, design and organize the use of an accommodations journal for one of your students. Answer these questions:

1. What would you include as headings for the journal?
2. When would the student make entries in the journal, and what types of support would the student need to make these entries?
3. With whom would the student share journal entries, and when would it be done?
4. How could the journal be used in the development of a student's IEP?

Adapted from the DC OSSE Testing Accommodations Manual (October, 2009):

http://osse.dc.gov/seo/frames.asp?doc=/seo/lib/seo/DC_Testing_Accommodations_Manual.pdf

CHAPTER IV: Least Restrictive Environment

Goal(s)

- LEAs will have a continuum of placements available for students with disabilities.
- IEP teams will make data-driven decisions in determining students' placements.

Understanding(s)

- IDEA mandates LEAs to have a continuum of educational placements that is not predicated upon funding, type of LEA, or current resources.
- A high number of hours on the IEP does not necessarily equate to a full time placement into a special education setting.
- Disability category does not determine educational placement.
- IEP decisions are made by the IEP team, not solely by one member of the team.

Essential Question(s)

- How can it be ensured that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment?
- How does an IEP team determine an appropriate environment for a student with a student with a disability, regardless of disability category?

Skills and Knowledge

By the end of the chapter LEAs and IEP teams will:

- Know how to make good placement decisions that are based on data
- Be able to be active participants in the decision making process
- Be able to document student progress
- Know when placement and/ or services can be scaled back
- Know the difference between placement and location

Key Words and Terms

Continuum of Educational Services

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Location

Placement

SECTION I. Defining Least Restrictive Environment

Free and appropriate public education (FAPE), as defined by IDEA, is special education and related services that are provided in conformity with an IEP, are without charge, and meet standards of the State Education Agency (SEA). According to the IDEA (2004), FAPE must be provided in the ***least restrictive environment (LRE)***, which is defined as the education of a student with a disability with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Another way of explaining LRE is through the use of the term ***placement.*** The removal of a student with a disability from the general education environment via placement into a separate class or separate school should only occur if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily. The IDEA does not require that all students with disabilities be placed in general education classrooms regardless of the student's individual abilities and needs; rather, IDEA contemplates that the IEP team will make individualized program decisions on a case-by-case basis once a student's strengths and needs are identified.

An appropriately designed placement is one that is tailored to meet the unique instructional and social needs of each individual student with a disability. For example, a suitable placement for one child may be in a general education classroom, with modification to the classroom materials, while for another child, more intense supports may be needed, such as a special class or school.

LRE Mandate (CFR §300.114(a)(2))

- To the maximum extent possible, students classified with a disability must be educated in the general education classroom.
- Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal from the general education classroom occurs only when the nature or the severity of the educational exceptionality is such that education in the general education class cannot be satisfactorily achieved with appropriate aids and supports.

Further Considerations for Complying with LRE

- Unless the student's IEP requires some other kind of arrangement, the student should attend the school he/she would if not eligible for special education services.
- Students classified with a disability must be afforded the opportunity to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular services and school activities along with their peers in general education settings.
- Less restrictive placements must always be considered.

SECTION II. Placement and Location

Placement is the level of service on the continuum of educational services that is determined to address a student's need (See Figure 3.1). It is also known as the educational environment. In the IEP process, placement is the last of a series of decisions made at the IEP meeting, by the IEP team. It is a decision made after the IEP team analyzes data related to a student's strengths, interests, needs, and present levels of functioning to identify appropriate goals, objectives/benchmarks for his or her individualized program. The placement decision is made by considering the level of student need and the intensity of service levels, including instructional modifications and accommodations, that are necessary to support measurable progress. In all cases, the IEP team determines the educational placement of a student with a disability on the basis of individual need.

In determining the educational placement of students with disabilities, consideration must be given to any potential harmful effect on the students or on the quality of the services that the students needs. Students with disabilities may not be removed from a general education classroom solely because of an absence of needed modifications in the general education classroom, disability category, language or communication needs, space availability, or administrative convenience.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Placement is NOT…

Location of services

Number of hours for special education services that a student receives

Reliant upon the category of disability, language or communication needs, space availability, needed modifications to the general education curriculum, or administrative convenience.

Continuum of Educational Services

The ***continuum of educational services*** is a spectrum of placements, or educational environments, in which an IEP can be implemented. It ranges from less restrictive (general education setting with supports and accommodations) to more restrictive (residential treatment facility), as shown in Figure 3.1.

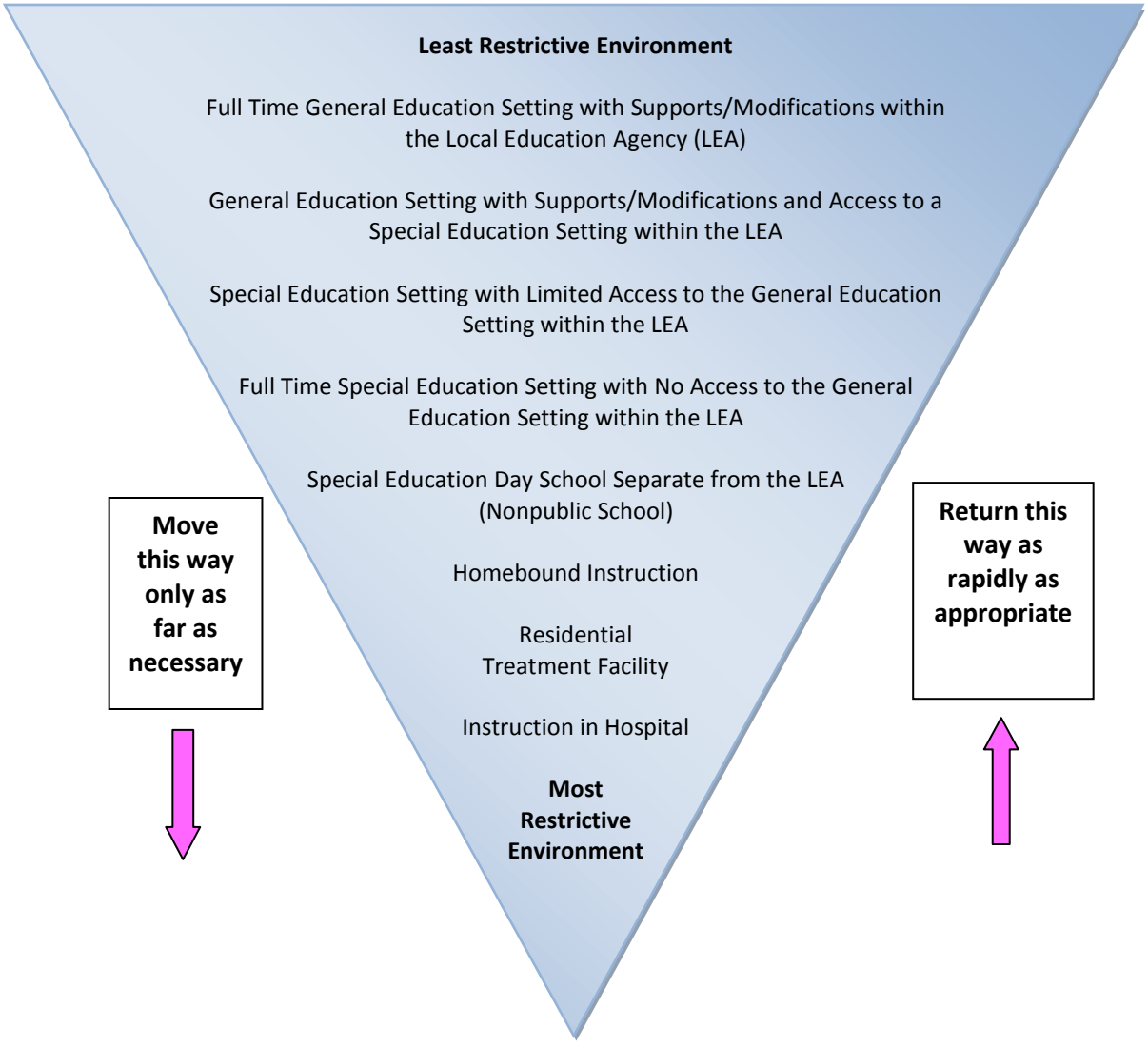

Figure 4.1- Continuum of Educational Services

Location

Location is the physical facility in which a student with a disability will receive services after a placement decision has been determined. If a student is receiving services within the LEA, the IEP team must follow the policies and procedures identified by the LEA. If a school anticipates that it may be unable to meet its obligation to provide a full continuum of placements in the LRE, and a student requires a different location for special education and related services, the school should contact its designated LEA representative for further information on next steps and follow the LEA's procedures for implementing the OSSE's Policy and Procedures for Placement Review, Revised (2009). *S*ee OSSE website (www.osse.dc.gov) for further information.

It is the expectation of OSSE that students with disabilities be educated in classrooms with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible. IEP teams should thoughtfully examine data related to student strengths, interests, and needs in placement decisions, and only move toward more restrictive placements in the continuum of educational services as appropriate. Positive learning outcomes are measured by progress toward the goals of the child's IEP and not the mastery of the general education curriculum. However, progress is equally determined by the design of the IEP and the degree to which educators are equipped with the skills, knowledge and resources to successfully implement the IEP. OSSE encourages a review not only of student performance but of adult practice prior to determining the need for a more restrictive placement.

SECTION III. Chapter IV Appendices

A4.1- LRE Planning Matrix

When developing an IEP and considering placement, each IEP team member should bring his or her knowledge and expertise to the table in order to discuss the appropriate IEP goals and services that will be provided to the student. This matrix may be useful to ensure participation in the general education curriculum in LRE for students with disabilities.

Step 1: Review the matrix and its key.

Step 2: Insert the student's schedule (or a typical schedule according to grade level) into the matrix on the top horizontal row. Insert the IEP goals in the first vertical column.

	Schedule/Classes					
Goals	Student will…	Time/class	Time/class	Time/class	Time/class	Time/class

Key
1= As is (with direction and supervision)
2= As is, with adapted materials (the way he/she will learn)
3= As is, with personal assistance (who) or equipment (what)
4= Adapted assignment and modified curriculum (what he/she will learn) in class
5= Adapted assignment and modified curriculum with personal assistance (who) or equipment (what) in class
6= Alternative setting

Step 3: Consider each goal in the class setting on the matrix and answer the following questions:

1. Can this goal be met in the general education setting just like every other student? (As is)
   - If yes, put a big check mark and move on to the next goal!
   - If no, move to the next question…

2. Can this goal be met in the general education setting with the aid of adapted materials?

   - If yes, put a check mark with a "2" beside it to denote that adapted materials will be needed for this goal in this classroom.
   - If no, move to the next question…

3. Can this goal be met in the general education setting with the assistance of personal help (who?) and/or some form of equipment (what?)?

   - If yes, put a check mark with a "3" beside it to denote that personal assistance, or related service provider, or some form of equipment will be needed for this goal in this specific classroom(s). Make a note with specifics about who will provide the assistance/service or what form of equipment will be provided.
   - If no, move to the next question…

4. Can this goal be met in the general education setting with adapted expectations?

   - If yes, put a checkmark with a "4" beside it to denote that the classroom expectations will be adapted for the child to be successful in the general education classroom setting.
   - If no, move to the next question…

5. Can this goal be met in the general education setting using an adapted assignment/ modified curriculum, with personal assistance (who) or equipment (what) in class?

   - If yes, put a checkmark with a "5" beside it to denote that the child will have alternate assignments for this class.
   - If no, move to the next question…

6. Can this goal best be met in an alternative setting rather than the general ed setting?

   - If yes, the IEP team will then weigh the remaining options available for the child – perhaps a content mastery class, resource room setting, or (last resort) self-contained setting.

The above matrix was adapted from the Texas Project FIRST- Using a Planning Matrix to Determine Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) *(http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/PlacementDecisions.html). R*etrieved on October 22, 2010.

A4.2- LRE Planning Matrix: A 1st Grade example

Trevor is a 1st grader who has cerebral palsy. He uses a Dynavox to speak. He needs assistance with most of his functional activities. As you can see, many of his IEP goals are met in the regular 1st grade classroom with supplementary aids and services. The IEP team believed that the spelling period could be better used for other goals/objectives so he is removed from the classroom at that time.

	Schedule					
Goals	**Trevor will…**	**8:15 a.m. Circle Time**	**8:35 a.m. Reading**	**9:00 a.m. Spelling**	**10:00 a.m. Science**	**11:30 a.m. Lunch**
	Use appropriate voice volume 3 out of 4 times per day	2, 3, 4 3: Dynavox	2, 4	3, 6	2, 3, 4 3: Dynavox	3 3: Dynavox
	Use 6-8 Intelligible words in phrases & sentences	3 Dynavox	3 3: Dynavox	3,6 3: Dynavox	3 3: Dynavox	3 3: Dynavox
	Participate in cooperative activity with 2 peers 2 days per week	3, 4 3: Dynavox	3, 4 3: Dynavox	3, 6 3: Dynavox	3, 4 3: Dynavox	
	Increase his sight vocabulary by 40 words to total of 240		2, 3, 4 3: Dynavox	2, 3, 4 3: Dynavox	2, 3, 4 3: Dynavox	

The above matrix was adapted from the Texas Project FIRST- Using a Planning Matrix to Determine Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/PlacementDecisions.html). Retrieved on October 22, 2010.

A4.3- LRE Planning Matrix: A 5th Grade Example

Chris is a 10 year old fifth grader with autism. He uses an assistive technology device for all writing (4). He needs accommodations for some materials, and modifications to curriculum for reading/writing and math only.

	Schedule					
Goals	**Chris…**	**8:20 – 9:15 English Lang Arts**	**9:15 – 9:45 Spelling**	**9:45 – 10:15 Specials**	**10:15 – 11:15 Social Studies**	**11:15 – 11:45 Lunch**
	Given a unit of study… will match pictures and/or written definitions of 10 vocabulary words with 80% accuracy…	2 (large font), 4	1		2 (large font), 4	
	Given a daily schedule …will transition to the next activity with only one verbal prompt.	2, 3 (peer, or para prof.)	2, 3 (peer, or para prof.)	3 (peer assist)	2, 3 (peer, or para prof.)	1
	Given a graphic organizer and use of assistive technology device… will write a 3 sentence paragraph on topic using correct noun/verb tense.	2, 3 (AT device)			2, 3 (AT device)	
	Given visual supports (event lists, timelines, and pictures)…. will put 5 events in correct sequence.	2			2	
	In a group or lab activity with accompanying timer … will participate with peers for 5 minutes without walking away with only one verbal redirection.	1	1	1	1	1

The above matrix was adapted from the Texas Project FIRST- Using a Planning Matrix to Determine Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/PlacementDecisions.html). Retrieved on October 22, 2010.

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