

SPECIAL EDUCATION

A Beginner's Guide To Serving All Students

Edited by

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Introduction

In today's classrooms, almost all teachers in education serve special education students. This collection of writings from preservice mathematics and science teachers from Teach North Texas at the University of North Texas is intended as a brief guide to special education and a starting point for other future educators in all subject areas. The viewpoint and examples given throughout the book are from the perspectives of mathematics and science majors as they prepare to become highly qualified general education teachers.

This book is the result of a four-week authentic learning project and experience implemented in the EDSE 4500 Project-Based Instruction course in the fall of 2014. The course instructors were Cindy Watson, PhD, and Nancy Terry, MEd; in addition, a special education expert, Jennifer Cantu, MEd, Educational Diagnostician, was invited to provide professional expertise in the special education field. As the class engaged in the project, they experienced Project-Based Learning (PBL), an extensive inquiry-based model of instruction that proactively challenges learners to develop twenty-first-century skills and to become self-regulated learners.

The students were challenged to answer the following real-world question: How can we, as teachers, create accommodations for a student with special needs while also maintaining high expectations? The class was divided into groups and each group was assigned a case study that included an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Each group then dissected the IEP to make a profile of the special education student and the student's disability. In addition, each group also researched the primary disability of the assigned case study and created:

1. a definition of the disability condition,
2. key characteristics of the disability condition,



Students and instructors from the Fall 2014 EDSE 4500 Project-Based Instruction course at the University of North Texas.

3. educational strategies/services,
4. a fictional case study description of the student, and
5. specific accommodations and/or modifications from an existing mathematics or science lesson that had been previously implemented.

This book compiles this research and the first attempt of this cohort of undergraduates to understand the ever-evolving world of special education and how a general education teacher plans for and makes accommodations and/or modifications for individual students.

As this book is being published, all of the undergraduates who participated in this project are gainfully employed and moving forward in their educational careers.

Learning together is a gift, and we are grateful for the deep learning that took place within this classroom with the following individuals: Nada Al-Ghussain, Kristin Ambrose, Nataly Arias, Rebekah Bennett, Chitra Bhatt, Cameron Burwell, Aimee Copadis, Lauren Green, Marty Ham, Chelsea Hancock, Alysha Jaballa, Jared Jacobs, Seth Leingang, Brittany McCash, Michelle McKay, Alyssa Mendez, Dale Montgomery, Caleb Morris, Andrew Nabors, Trang Nguyen, Katie Pelzel, and Jessica Trevizo.

Introduction

We hope that you will research special education further and continue to connect with us via #PBLChat, #PBLNewbies @TeachNorthTexas, and teachnorthtexaspi.com or teachnorthtexas.unt.edu.

With blessings and gratitude,

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1

Understanding the Basic Rights and Language of Special Education

The Teach North Texas students explored and explained key terms and created a timeline of the events that influenced the incorporation of special education into the public school setting. By researching and discovering the history of special education and critical legislation, the preservice teachers built their knowledge of the field of special education.

Understanding the Basic Rights of Students with Disability Conditions

Prior to the twentieth century, parents had few options for their children with disability conditions other than educating their children themselves or paying for expensive private education. Many states enforced laws that excluded children with disability conditions from attending public schools. Children struggling with disability conditions were often “warehoused” in facilities where instructional practices were largely abandoned.

The origins of our current special education system are rooted in the early 1960s. The abbreviated timeline that follows provides a general guide to the history of special education:

1961

- President John F. Kennedy creates a panel on mental retardation that paves the way for federal funding in special education (*The History of Special Education*, n.d.).
- The Teachers of the Deaf Act becomes law, with a focus on helping children with difficulties of hearing or deafness.

1963

- The Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Amendments of 1963 are passed based on the recommendations of the panel created by President Kennedy. This is the first legislative move toward funding for states to upgrade their intellectual disability condition programs.

1965

- The Elementary and Secondary Education Act is signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. It is the first federal grant program specifically for disabled youth (*The History of Special Education*, n.d.), and creates a Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, now called the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

1968

- The Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act is enacted. It is designed to identify eligible children ages 0-5 with disability conditions, determine needs and strategies of early intervention, and provide support to children and families in their homes and communities.

1972

- Two significant lawsuits challenging existing practices of denying students who have limited mental abilities or behavioral issue access to school settings are decided: *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (P.A.R.C.) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) and *Mills v. Board of Education* (1972). These decisions provide a framework for subsequent cases to support a movement toward equal protection for students with disability conditions.

1973

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 grants equal access to public facilities and protects individuals from discrimination due to their disability conditions. Although a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is first suggested in this act, it is not mandated until the Education for All Handicapped Children Act and its successor, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), become law.

1974

- Parent and adult student access to educational records is formalized through the enactment of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of

1974. FERPA protects the privacy of student education records, but also gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Eligible students and parents have the right to inspect and review their records and request a correction if they suspect an error. If the school chooses not to change the records, a formal hearing is held to determine the outcome. The parent and student then have the right to issue a recorded and written statement about the contested information. Under FERPA, eligible students and parents have the right to receive annual notification of their rights. FERPA also mandates that schools must obtain written permission from parents or eligible students to release a student's records.

1975

- The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) becomes law. Now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), this law intends to (1) “assure that all children with disabilities have available to them . . . a free appropriate public education [FAPE] which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs”; (2) “assure that the rights of children with disability conditions and their parents...are protected”; (3) “assist states and localities to provide for the education of all children with disabilities”; and (4) “assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate all children with disability conditions” (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975, as quoted in U.S. Department of Education, 2010). It requires all public schools accepting federal funds to provide equal access to education and one free meal a day for children with physical and/or mental disability conditions (*The History of Special Education*, n.d.). EAHCA officially acknowledges the *right* of children with disability conditions to receive their instruction in the least restrictive environment (LRE) available to them, making it unconstitutional and punishable by law to deny education to children with disability conditions. It also mandates that schools provide these students with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) (see more about FAPE in the discussion of IDEA below). Furthermore, it extends the rights of parents to challenge their school's treatment of children with disability conditions without forcing the parents to go through the federal court process, which often led to cases being backlogged indefinitely and required sizable litigation costs. Instead, EAHCA allows parents to challenge decisions through an immediate and less expensive administrative hearing process. The combination of these attributes of EAHCA effectively end any attempts by schools and administrators to avoid meeting national special education requirements.

1990

- EAHCA is amended and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The most significant change is the requirement that school districts look at outcomes and assist students with disability conditions in transitioning from high school to postsecondary life.

Signed into law by President George H. W. Bush, IDEA governs how public agencies and states provide special education and early attention and identification for educational services for children ages 3 to 21 within specific categories. Under IDEA, special education and related services are to be designed to meet the unique learning needs of eligible children with disability conditions. IDEA stresses that students with special needs should be prepared for further education, employment, and independent living. IDEA also provides for a free appropriate public education (FAPE), defined in the law as an educational program that is individualized to a specific child, is designed to meet that child's unique needs, provides access to the general curriculum, and meets the grade-level standards established by the state, and from which the child receives educational benefit.

IDEA recognizes disability conditions under the categories shown in Table 1. The table's second column shows the corresponding categories under Texas law.

States determine how to implement these categories. Texas interprets the list as shown in the second column of Table 1.

TABLE 1 Disability Conditions Under Federal and Texas Law

<i>IDEA Disability Conditions</i>	<i>Texas Interpretation of Disability Conditions</i>
Autism	Autism (AU)
Deaf-blindness	
Deafness	
Emotional disturbance	Emotional Disturbance (ED)
Hearing Impairment	Auditory Impairment (AI)
Intellectual Disability (formerly indicated as Mental Retardation)	Intellectual Disability (ID) (formerly indicated as Mental Retardation)
Orthopedic Impairment	Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
Other Health Impairment	Other Health Impairment (OHI)
Specific Learning Disability	Learning Disability (LD)
Speech or Language Impairment	Speech Impairment (SI)
Traumatic Brain Injury	Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
Visual Impairment including blindness	Visual Impairment (VI) Noncategorical Early Childhood (NCEC)
Multiple Disabilities	Multiple Disabilities (MD)

Understanding the Basic Rights and Language of Special Education

Under IDEA, students with difficulties in learning need to be identified and evaluated so that schools can ascertain their deficits and place them in the correct general or special education program and provide any needed related services. Students with suspected disability conditions are assessed in all areas that could be considered disability conditions. These areas include but are not limited to, language, health, emotional, sociological, cognitive, academic, and assistive technology. Adult students or parents have the right to ask for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) if they do not agree with the evaluation results given by the school. Once the assessment is completed, a meeting is held to review the results and determine the appropriate accommodations and/or modifications, and supports for the student with disability conditions, providing the basis for the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is enacted, incorporating the Section 504 regulations. Individual 504 plans start to become more common practice for students. Recall that Section 504 had been designed to create accommodations for general education students who were identified as having a disability condition, either temporary or permanent, that impacted their educational performance. Identified students with an educational need are allowed accommodations within the general education curriculum and environment. Only a student identified for special education services and supports can receive modifications to the curriculum.

1997

- IDEA is reauthorized with a requirement that students with disability conditions be included in state- and districtwide assessments. General education teachers are also to be included as members of the IEP team. With the reauthorization of IDEA, students with disability conditions are granted access to on-level curriculum. With the increased access, standards and accountability for students with disability conditions are also increased.

2001

- The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act establishes standards of achievement by creating measurable goals to improve student performance. NCLB's purpose is to narrow or close the achievement gap, particularly in the area of math and reading. It calls for all students, including those with disability conditions, to be proficient in math and reading by the year 2014.

2004

- IDEA is reauthorized with many changes. The biggest change is a call for more accountability at the state and local levels, as more data outcomes are

required. The changes also require school districts to provide adequate instruction and intervention to help keep students in general education classrooms.

Impact of IDEA

Under the 2004 IDEA reauthorization, states are held accountable to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) with full and equal access to the general education curriculum for students with disability conditions who are enrolled in the public school system. Highly qualified teachers for these students are also required (*Building the Legacy: IDEA 2004*, n.d.).

Free Appropriate Public Education The child who is qualified for a FAPE is defined as one who “(1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment” (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2010). All school-age children who are defined as individuals with disability conditions under section 504 are eligible for a FAPE. Moreover, an “appropriate education” is defined as education in either a general education classroom with supplemental aids and services, or as services given in a separate classroom for all or part of the school day. An appropriate education comprises multiple services, including educational services for disabled students, the education of disabled students with nondisabled students, evaluation and placements processes, and the institution of due process procedures. The domains of appropriate education must maintain the educational rights of students, meet the needs of students, and guarantee fairness in education for students with disability conditions and the involvement of their families. Furthermore, a free education is defined as being free of charge for any educational services and related services for children with disability conditions and their parents.

Full and Equal Access to General Education Curriculum One of the most significant changes concerns the requirement that students with disability conditions receive access to the general curriculum. Specifically, it requires that students with disability conditions: (1) have access to the general curriculum, (2) be involved in the general curriculum, and (3) progress in the general curriculum. The overall right to have access to the general education curriculum can, in fact, be viewed as consisting of three interrelated stages: access, involvement and progress (Karger & Hitchcock, 2003) as shown in Figure A.

The first stage, *access*, refers to the accessibility of the curriculum to the student. *Involvement*, the second stage, can be thought of as the ongoing process of meaningful participation by the student in the general education curriculum and, as such, is an interim phase that links access to progress. *Progress* in the general education curriculum, the third stage, refers not only to a final outcome but also to an evaluative measure that can feed back into the earlier stages of access

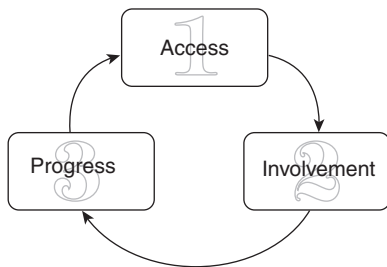


FIGURE A Requirement of Full and Equal Access to the General Education Curriculum

and involvement. Together, the three stages—access, involvement, and progress—form an ongoing cycle.

Understanding the Basic Language of Special Education

Teachers must understand several key terms to properly perform their duties to assist students with disability conditions.

The special education process starts with a general education student who is experiencing difficulties in the classroom. General education teachers should have a team to whom they report their concerns and observations for a formal review. This team determines what has been tried or if further information needs to be gathered. Depending on the circumstances and needs of the student, a variety of supports may be generated, including a Response to Intervention (RTI) (see below). Students are monitored to review the impact of these supports on their learning. Depending on the response to the intervention and the fidelity of the implementation, the programming support is reviewed and either continued as positive progress is noted, or revised. If a student is not responding and positive progress with these additional supports is not measured, the team may decide to alter the current plan or implement a different method. If the student continues to struggle even after additional options have been implemented with fidelity, the team may decide to refer the student for a special education assessment.

Definition of Response to Intervention

A Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. RTI is a process of systematically documenting the performance of students as evidence of the need for additional services after making changes in classroom instruction. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided

with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. These services may be provided by a variety of personnel, including general education teachers and specialists. If the student continues to struggle, special educators and specialists may be involved in assessments and/or supports. Progress is closely monitored to assess both the learning rate and level of performance of the individual student. Educational decisions about the intensity and duration of interventions and movement between the RTI tiers are based on individual student response to instruction. If a student progresses through the different tiers and does not appear to be responding in a positive trend to the interventions attempted, the committee may determine that a Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE) is warranted to help explain the lack of progress. Once a student has been referred (or at least every three years once identified for special education services), the committee meets to review the FIE data.

Definition of Full and Individual Evaluation

A Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE) is conducted by trained professionals to determine if a student meets special education eligibility criteria as well as to determine the presence or absence of a physical, mental, or emotional disability condition that may affect the student's successful participation in the general education curriculum. The evaluation is not a single test and should cover all areas of suspected disability conditions. Standardization of testing procedures should be maintained and if variations are needed for testing, they should be documented in the report. The procedures may be adjusted (e.g., using the student's most proficient method of communication) to account for a disability condition.

The Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee, also known as the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) committee, uses the FIE report to make a decision about eligibility for services, grading criteria, accommodations and/or modifications, and procedures of participation in activities.

Definition of Admission, Review and Dismissal Meeting

Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee is the term used in Texas for the meeting where a group of specific people make educational decisions concerning the educational services of students referred to or placed in special education. ARD committee responsibilities include, but are not limited to; reviewing all diagnostic reassessment results; determining if a need exists for specially designed instruction that can only be provided through special education services; developing the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) with goals and/or objectives; providing educational placement in the least restrictive environment (LRE); reviewing all special services annually to determine the need for continuation, change, review, or dismissal; ensuring that alternative options are reviewed; reviewing any additional services discussed; and determining eligibility for an extended school year (ESY).

Understanding the Basic Rights and Language of Special Education

ARD meetings include an administrator, general education teacher, special education teacher, and diagnostician. Schools are required to invite parents to the meeting by prior written notice. Parents are not required to attend the meeting, but can decide to participate by phone or to not participate at all. The student's progress is carefully reviewed to determine if changes are warranted. Determinations are made about appropriate educational programming, supports, state testing options, and related services to ensure the student is in the least restrictive environment (LRE) with access to the general education curriculum.

The final ARD document reflects the results of the meeting and may include but is not limited to the following areas. Each subject is typically covered in the order presented below:

- Review of existing evaluation data (REED).
- Eligibility category.
- Transition plan and supplement, if appropriate.
- Progress on goals since the last annual or prior meeting.
- Health.
- Behavior plan and supplement, if applicable.
- Present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP).
- Teacher reports.
- Proposed goals and/or objectives.
- Determination of services to be provided in both general and/or special education. The schedule of services page lists courses where services are to be provided, who is to provide the services, accommodations and/or modifications to be made, any direct or related services to be provided, and state testing options with any accommodations/supports.
- Review of supports tried, provided, and considered along with consideration of least restrictive environment (LRE).
- Graduation plan and supplement, if applicable.
- Extended school year (ESY) supplement, if applicable.
- Minutes.
- Assurance and signature page.

The final ARD document is designed to reflect the student's specific needs and goals and to ensure that all children with disability conditions are provided with unique services tailored to their specific needs.

Definition of Individualized Educational Program

Once a student has been formally evaluated through an FIE and found eligible for special education services through the ARD/IEP process, the parents work with a school team to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The IEP is a written plan developed/reviewed/revised by the parents and school team,

and adopted at an ARD/IEP meeting. It includes the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP), with consideration given to eligibility criteria. An IEP is created to explicitly outline specific goals and objectives to improve the educational outcome for the student. An IEP must be developed before a student can begin receiving special education services and it must be reviewed and updated each year. This annual review is required for as long as the student remains eligible for special education services. The ARD/IEP committee must consider the least restrictive environment (LRE) with access to the general education curriculum when reviewing the progress and placement of a student with a disability condition.

Definition of Least Restrictive Environment

Least restrictive environment (LRE) is a requirement in both state and federal law that requires a student with a disability condition to be educated in a general education classroom setting, to the maximum extent appropriate, with his or her nondisabled peers.

Removal from the general educational setting should only occur when a student's disability conditions prevent satisfactory education in a general education classroom setting even with the use of supplementary aides and services. Both state and federal law ensure that children are not unnecessarily removed from the regular classrooms or isolated from other nondisabled children of their age. Several factors are used when deciding on the LRE, include the type of skills needed to learn, how much individual instruction is needed, and other education issues individual to each child (Logsdon, n.d.). In consideration of core academic areas in English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies, the greater the academic or developmental difference between the student's level of functioning and that of his or her same-age peers, the greater the likelihood that the student will receive instruction in a more restrictive setting.

2

Understanding Disability Conditions and Demonstrating How to Meet the Individual Needs of a Student

A student meets criteria for special education services if he or she has a disability condition that significantly impacts educational performance to the point of demonstrating an educational need for specially designed instruction. After the UNT students had a better understanding of the development of current special education laws, they compared disability conditions, and found differences between federal and state categories used for identification purposes. Additionally, they identified the key characteristics of the disability and created suggested educational strategies based upon the services required in the IEP of their assigned case study. Each group wrote a fictional description of the student based on the information in the IEP.

Visual Impairment, Auditory Impairment, and Multiple Disabilities

According to federal regulations, visual impairment includes blindness and a separate category called deaf/blindness. In the area of hearing deficits, federal regulations include deafness, deaf/blindness, and hearing impairment.

In Texas, these conditions are categorized differently. Visual Impairment (VI) includes vision deficits only and Auditory Impairment (AI) includes hearing deficits only. A combination of a visual impairment and a hearing impairment is categorized as a Multiple Disability (MD) condition, which follows the federal category of deaf/blindness. Multiple Disability can incorporate other disabilities beyond the examples listed here.

Visual Impairment

Definition Visual Impairment (VI) is defined as a disability condition that impacts vision to the degree that, even with correction, it continues to impact the educational performance of the student.

Students with Visual Impairment can be classified into one of three categories.

1. Low vision: individuals may use their vision to learn but may need access to devices to assist with reading.
2. Functionally blind limitations: individuals may use their vision for functional tasks, but tend to rely on touch and hearing for learning.
3. Functionally blind: individuals rely on touch and sound for both learning and functional tasks.

Key Characteristics

- Visual impairment impacts learning abilities; the impact is dependent upon the severity and loss of vision.
- Social skills may be impacted as ability to read nonverbal cues is limited.

Suggested Educational Strategies/Services

- Monitor for light sensitivity, eye fatigue, and limited peripheral vision.
- Provide additional explanations to describe information presented visually.
- Consider assistive technology supports such as specialized glasses, magnifiers, screen readers, or audio supports.
- Determine level of support needed to access various visual materials such as textbooks, worksheets, and overheads.
- Monitor classroom environment for potential changes or trip hazards.

Auditory Impairment

Definition Auditory Impairment (AI) includes two subcategories: hearing impairment and deafness. Hearing impairment involves hearing loss that may be permanent or fluctuating and that significantly impacts educational performance. An individual with a hearing impairment may be able to gain some information through verbal means, depending on the severity of the hearing loss. Deafness is defined as a hearing loss so severe that the ability to process spoken information with or without amplification is very limited to nonexistent.

Students with hearing deficits fall along a spectrum of communication that includes oral communication, manual communication, and total communication (*Hearing Impairments*, 2013).

- Oral communication includes speech, reading, and the use of residual hearing.
- Manual communication involves sign language, fingerspelling, and/or cued speech.

Demonstrating How to Meet the Individual Needs of a Student

- Total communication is a method of instruction that combines the oral method plus sign language, fingerspelling, and cued speech.

Key Characteristics

- Typically, average cognitive abilities are present, but limitation in exposure to verbal material can cause a lag in learning.
- Difficulties may be seen with cooperative play (turn taking) or other learning activities.
- Difficulties may be seen with social and emotional skills due to limitations in hearing nonverbal cues, voice intonation, and other experiences received from verbal formats.
- Hearing impairment may be localized to one ear or may impact both.
- Speech and language areas may be significantly impacted.

Suggested Educational Strategies/Services

- Assistive technology such as hearing aids, auditory training devices, computers, altering devices, and closed captioning.
- Additional supports for learning such as interpreters, use of sign language, or communication devices.
- Direct instruction to assist with identification of nonverbal cues and social interactions.
- Frequent review and repetition of vocabulary and word development.
- Notetaking assistance for information presented verbally.
- Preferential seating near mode of communication.
- Role playing to assist with social cues and emotional skills.

Deaf/Blindness (Federal Classification) or Multiple Disability (Texas Classification)

Both the federal and the Texas classifications recognize the AI and VI as present together in this condition.

Definition Deaf/blindness means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or for children with blindness.

Key Characteristics

- Combination of losses limits access to auditory and visual information.
- May exhibit behaviors related to excessive touching or smelling when attempting to navigate the environment.

- May be easily frustrated.
- May exhibit self-stimulatory behaviors.

Suggested Educational Strategies/Services

- Braille, large print, and object symbols.
- Communication boards or tactile sign language.
- Frequent feedback and instruction to challenge student learning.
- Self-management procedures.
- Self-regulation instruction.
- Structured classroom to support choice making.

CASE STUDY

Chelsea

Chelsea is a student who has both visual and auditory impairment and receives her core instruction in a special education setting for reading and math. Her academic level in these areas is four to five years below her same-age peers, yet in the areas of science and social studies, she receives her instruction in the general education setting with the support of a special education teacher. The two teachers work together to support Chelsea with accommodations and modifications in the general education setting. Due to her multiple disability areas, she accesses adaptive technology for visual and auditory needs.

Specific Accommodations/Modifications as Adopted by the ARD Committee

- Adaptive equipment to assist with hearing difficulties.
- Check for understanding.
- Concrete reinforcements for motivation.
- Frequent breaks to relieve stress and anxiety.
- Alternate modified tests/texts.
- Preferential seating to help with vision.
- Manipulatives to help with abstract concepts.
- Oral administration of tests and oral directions.

Specific Accommodations/Modifications for Chelsea

Preferential Seating Accommodation The star on the seating chart in Figure B indicates where Chelsea will be sitting. By sitting in front of the class, Chelsea will have a better opportunity to see the smartboard as well as hear the teacher's

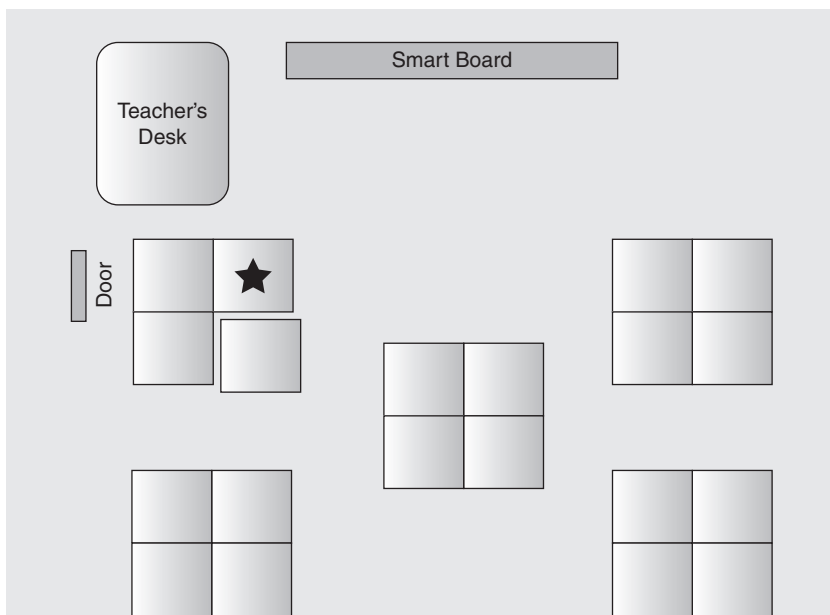


FIGURE B Seating Chart for Chelsea

instructions. Also, sitting near the teacher's desk allows Chelsea to be monitored more closely by the teacher. Lastly, Chelsea is sitting near the door so she can easily exit the room for the frequent breaks that she may need.

Frequent Breaks Chelsea will be allowed to have several breaks throughout the lesson. Chelsea will be given a green note card to facilitate these breaks. During the lesson, if Chelsea feels the need to take a quick restroom or water break, she will quietly raise the green card to let the teacher know. Two procedural conditions will be placed on the card to minimize class distractions: Chelsea must refrain from waving the note card in the air, and she must refrain from yelling the teacher's name.

Modified Tests/Texts To meet Chelsea's visual need, the text on her homework will be enlarged to a 25-point font size. Also, Chelsea will be allowed to use a magnifying glass to enlarge the print of the classroom textbook as needed. Finally, some repetitive questions will be eliminated from her homework.

Positive and Concrete Reinforcement Studies have shown that peppermints have helped individuals concentrate and do better on tasks that

require concentration. Therefore, her teacher will provide Chelsea with a peppermint to help her concentrate and complete her tasks. Also, Chelsea will either receive a stamp or a sticker on assignments that she completes with effort and also when she demonstrates mastery. These concrete reinforcements will be used to provide motivation for Chelsea.

Special Instructional/Adaptive Equipment Chelsea will be permitted to have Theraputty with her during any exams. Theraputty is a silicone putty that will not harden or dry out. This product can be used as a stress reliever as well as to strengthen the muscles of the fingers, hand, and forearm. Theraputty can be stretched, pinched, twisted, and squeezed. Chelsea will wear her hearing aids due to her auditory impairment.

Oral Signed Administration/Oral Directions The general education teacher will need to meet with a special education specialist to schedule testing dates. Chelsea has the option to access a screen reader with magnification for testing. If needed, the special education specialist will sit with Chelsea and read question and answer choices aloud.

For Chelsea to understand directions, her teacher may need to explain the instructions to her orally or in writing, depending on how they are initially provided to the class.

Autism

Definition Autism (AU) is the most common condition in a group of developmental disorders known as the autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). Autism is characterized by impaired social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication, and unusual, repetitive, or severely limited activities and interests. Usually evident by age three, autism affects a child's ability to understand language, to play, and to relate to others.

Key Characteristics

- First appears in infancy or childhood.
- Impaired social interaction.
- Limited ability to understand language, play, and relate to others.
- Problems with verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Unusual, repetitive, or severely limited activities and interests.

Suggested Educational Strategies/Services

- Students with autism may need highly structured schedules.
- Individuals with autism may thrive with structured teaching. Some elements of structured teaching include physical structure, visual structure, and teaching method.
 - Physical structure provides environmental organization and clear physical and visual boundaries, and minimizes visual and auditory distractions. The goal is to reduce visual and auditory distractions to a minimum.
 - Visual structure lists daily happenings in the order in which they will occur, enabling the student to seamlessly change activities and surroundings without support. The goal is to assist the student in transitioning independently between activities and environments.
 - Teaching method refers to the systematic and organized presentation of tasks/materials for students to learn to work independently and without adult directions or prompts. The goal is to wean the student off adult instructions through the planned, orderly detailing of tasks and materials (Cantu, 2014).
- Common strategies that are effective for individuals with autism include:
 - Communication interventions.
 - Daily schedules reflecting minimal unstructured time.
 - In-home and community-based training.
 - Role playing to develop social skills and to make visible the thoughts of the student.
 - Structured teaching that include physical structures, visual structures, and teaching method, as described above.
 - Peer buddies to encourage social interaction and classroom participation.
 - Videos modeling social stories.

CASE STUDY

Jett

Jett is a student in the eleventh grade and is identified with an autism condition. He is enrolled in the special education class of Fundamentals of Math Models and is currently functioning at about the seventh-grade level in the area of math concepts. In general education, he is enrolled in English 3, U.S. History, and Economics. Jett interacts with his peers and friends and is comfortable around them.

*Specific Accommodations/Modifications as
Adopted by the ARD Committee*

- Behavior management plan.
- Check for understanding.
- Explicit directions given and extended wait time used.
- Extended time for assignments/tests.
- Frequent positive feedback.
- Preferential seating near instruction, away from distractions.
- Reminders to stay on task.
- Shortened assignments (e.g., reduce up to 25% of word banks, multiple choice).

Specific Accommodations/Modifications for Jett

For a quadratic formula lesson plan, an example of how to implement the accommodations for Jett was created.

First, for preferential seating, Jett is placed near the board and the teacher to ensure close monitoring. The star on the seating chart in Figure C indicates where Jett will be sitting.

Second, for positive feedback, the teacher will stamp Jett's work when progress is made. Stickers, points, or class money can serve as tangible rewards. Figure D is a visual representation to help the student understand how a positive reinforcement/reward system works. Also, giving Jett specific and explicit written directions is critical in helping Jett to stay focused and to complete tasks within the time allotted.

Third, Jett needs to be reminded to appropriately express his feelings and emotions as a part of his behavior management plan. He is also working on recognizing social cues from his peers and friends. His seating arrangement close to the teacher facilitates encouragement or redirection.

Fourth, for shortened assignments Jett will receive reduced problems that are accommodated for his knowledge and pace. For example, although the class expectation is to complete twelve problems, Jett would complete six. An example of an original exploration activity on quadratics compared to its modified version is shown in Figure E. The student can either work alone or with the group.

Figure F illustrates an evaluation that deletes two questions, but continues to assess the student's understanding of the quadratic formula.

Last, the teacher should constantly review Jett's work progress during a lesson and check for understanding. Providing a reward each time Jett completes a problem correctly or demonstrates knowledge of the learning objective may provide incentives for Jett to remain engaged in the learning process.

Demonstrating How to Meet the Individual Needs of a Student

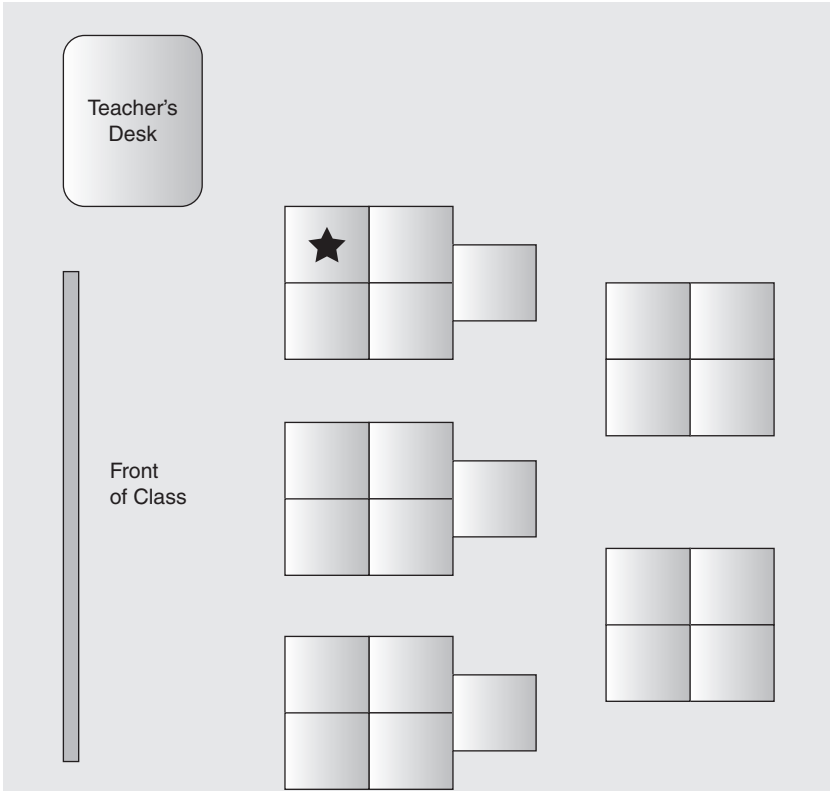


FIGURE C Seating Chart for Jett

	$=$	1 point
--	-----	---------

Use your points to buy treats:







 candy 5 points	 iPod break 8 points	 break area 5 points
 iPad break 10 points	 computer 10 points	 coloring break 8 points

FIGURE D Positive Reinforcement/Reward System Example (adapted from <https://www.pinterest.com/lisabhines/classroom-economy-system/>)

Original exploration		Modified exploration	
Names: _____		Names: _____	
Discriminant: $b^2 - 4ac$ Quadratic Formula: $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$		Discriminant: $b^2 - 4ac$ Quadratic Formula: $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$	
1.	4.	1. $x^2 + 4x + 2$ Identify: $a =$ $b =$ $c =$	4. $x^2 + 2x + 1$ Identify: $a =$ $b =$ $c =$
2.	5.	2. $x^2 - 8x + 2$ Identify: $a =$ $b =$ $c =$ Find the discriminant: $b^2 - 4ac$	5. $4x^2 + 8x + 3$ Identify: $a =$ $b =$ $c =$ How many real solutions are there?
3.	6.	3. $5x^2 + 2x + 1$ Identify: $a =$ $b =$ $c =$ State x-values: $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$	6. $3x^2 + 6x + 3$ Identify: $a =$ $b =$ $c =$ State x-values: $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$

FIGURE E A Modified Exploration Activity on Quadratics

Original evaluation	Modified evaluation
EVALUATE Day 2	
1. Name _____ Period _____	1. Name _____ Period _____
Solve the following problem using the Quadratic Formula $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$	Solve the following problem using the Quadratic Formula $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$
Show all work and answer all three of the questions about your problem	$x^2 + 5x - 8 = 0$
$x^2 + 5x - 8 = 0$	a. Identify: $a =$ $b =$ $c =$
How many solutions are there? What kind of numbers are the solution(s)? What are the solutions?	What are the solutions?
2. Why do we use the Quadratic Formula?	

FIGURE F Original Evaluation and Modified Evaluation Samples

Emotional Disturbance

Definition According to IDEA and the supporting Code of Federal Regulations [Title 34, Section 300.8(4)(i)], Emotional Disturbance (ED) “is a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects educational performance

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or

Demonstrating How to Meet the Individual Needs of a Student

- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.”

Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance according to the above definition. Children with the most serious emotional disturbances may exhibit distorted thinking, excessive anxiety, bizarre motor acts, and abnormal mood swings.

Key Characteristics

- Aggression or self-injurious behavior (acting out, fighting).
- Hyperactivity (short attention span, impulsiveness).
- Immaturity (inappropriate crying, temper tantrums, poor coping skills).
- Learning difficulties (academically performing below grade level).
- Withdrawal (not interacting socially with others, excessive fear or anxiety).

Suggested Educational Strategies/Services

- Allow the student to work alone, take a break, or have a hall pass for some quiet time apart as needed.
- Coordinate services between home, school, and community, keeping the communication channels open.
- Develop social skills through structured group work, cooperative learning activities, peer interactions, and team projects.
- Identify the student’s strengths and create opportunities for academic and personal success.
- Provide psychological or counseling services (e.g., a qualified social worker, psychologist, guidance counselor).
- Set clear behavioral rules and expectations for the entire class and enforce them.

CASE STUDY

Star

Star is a student with an emotional disturbance condition. She is on grade level in all of her core classes and has Content Mastery (CM) pull-out support for her math class. Star struggles with math, but manages passing grades over the semester. She struggles with calculating math problems, which can lead to her getting the wrong answer even if she completes all the steps correctly. She also has difficulty working through concepts related to time, money, and measurement.

*Specific Accommodations/Modifications as
Adopted by the ARD Committee*

- Allow for a maximum of two breaks per class period (1 minute each).
- Break tasks into smaller tasks.
- Check for understanding frequently.
- Provide Content Mastery (CM) pull out support.
- Extend time up to 25%.
- Provide note-taking assistance for good faith effort.
- Offer repeated review.
- Provide supplemental aids.

Specific Accommodations/Modifications for Star

The current lesson calls for students to complete a total of 20 math problems. An effective way to accommodate for Star is to break her page into sets of five problems. After completing a set, she then checks her work with the teacher to ensure accuracy and clarify any misunderstanding. She then starts on the next set. At the end of the given time period, her work will be graded based on what is completed or she will be allowed extra time to complete the remainder of the items.

- A process sheet for completing the math task of factoring will be developed and provided to the student. This supplemental aid will be used as a reference tool when completing problems to increase accuracy and provide repetition of steps until such steps are internalized.
- To introduce this math lesson, a PowerPoint will be shown to the class. Star will be provided a paper copy of the PowerPoint with space to write any notes from the class discussion.

Intellectual Disability

Intellectual disability (ID) is typically identified before an individual is 18 years old. It is characterized by two components: delayed cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior. Because the specific impairments caused by an intellectual disability are broad and dependent on the child, there are numerous indicators and symptoms. Below are two distinct lists of the common indicators for individuals with intellectual disabilities: Delayed Intellectual Functioning and Adaptive Behavior.

Common Indicators of Delayed Intellectual Functioning Intellectual functioning refers to the student's ability to learn and stay on task, and to the student's academic performance over time.

Demonstrating How to Meet the Individual Needs of a Student

- Ability to Learn
 - Exhibits delays in speech and language development.
 - Has difficulty with working memory tasks (e.g., math facts or spelling words).
 - Exhibits concrete thinking primarily and has difficulty thinking abstractly.
 - Pace of learning lags significantly behind same-age peers.
 - Remembers information one day and forgets it the next.
- Staying on Task
 - Is easily distracted by personal interests (e.g., cartoons, music, videos).
 - Is easily frustrated.
 - May not be confident in school performance.
 - Exhibits a short attention span.
- Academic Performance

Academic challenges emerge during primary school and are likely to increase as the academic content increases. These challenges may include:

 - Applying academic skills related to content (e.g., math word problems, identifying themes and symbols in literature).
 - Applying academic strategies (e.g., note taking, memorizing definitions).
 - Comprehending and summarizing what has been read.
 - Generalizing material learned in one setting to another (e.g., from school to the community).
 - Limited vocabulary (knowledge and use of words).
 - Low achievement in most or all academic areas (e.g., reading comprehension, mathematics, written expression) due to lack of conceptual understanding.

Common Indicators of Adaptive Behavior Adaptive behavior requires the ability to function in everyday life. Support structures are needed with behavior, self-help, and socialization indicators.

- Behavior
 - Has difficulty following rules and routines.
 - Displays some obsessive/compulsive behaviors.
 - Exhibits problem behaviors and some immaturity.
 - Has trouble linking actions to consequences.
 - May be clumsy.
- Self-help
 - Has difficulty bathing, dressing, grooming, and/or feeding self.
 - May lack understanding of personal safety or community navigation issues.
 - May need reminders about hygiene (washing hands, brushing teeth, etc.).

- Socialization
 - Has difficulty understanding and using language (verbal and nonverbal).
 - May misinterpret the intentions of others.
 - May not understand how to pay for things.
 - May use simple language with short sentences.
 - May have delay in speech, or may have no speech at all.
 - May have poor social skills (relationships with family and friends).

Levels of Intellectual Disability There are three stages of intellectual disability. They are 1) Mild Intellectual Disability, 2) Moderate Intellectual Disability, and 3) Profound Intellectual Disability.

1. Scope of Mild Intellectual Disability: A mild intellectual disability is determined by an IQ score that ranges from 50 to 70. A child in this IQ range is generally capable, but requires more support than a child without an intellectual disability. With proper assistance from family, friends, and teachers, a child in this range can find success in the daily interactions society demands.

- Possible Living Parameters
 - May learn to read and write in appropriate educational setting.
 - Likely to develop reading, writing, and math skills at a basic level.
 - Can independently participate in most leisure activities within the community.
 - Will have important relationships with people in her life.
 - May marry and raise a family with support.
 - May have a job suited to his skills.
 - May live and travel independently with support.

- Suggested Support
 - Needs support to build social skills.
 - Needs help to handle money and to plan and organize a daily routine.

2. Scope of Moderate Intellectual Disability: The next stage is called moderate intellectual disability, defined by an IQ score that ranges from 35 to 50. A child with moderate ID requires even more support than the child with mild ID. The child with moderate ID generally struggles with everyday tasks unless visual cues or frequent reminders and outside help with scheduling are provided.

- Possible Living Parameters
 - Will have important relationships with the people in her life.
 - May learn to navigate the community and travel with support.

Demonstrating How to Meet the Individual Needs of a Student

- Will recognize environmental print (e.g., signs, logos, sight words) in daily life.
- May display independence in certain daily living activities, such as dressing and bathing.
- Suggested Support
 - Help with planning trips and handling money independently.
 - May need visual prompts such as daily schedules and pictures of routines.
 - May need support in daily life with many tasks.
- 3. Scope of Profound Intellectual Disability: The most severe stage is a profound intellectual disability. This disability is defined by an IQ score that ranges from 20 to 35. A child with this disability will struggle with things such as speech, communication, and self-awareness. The support required for children with profound ID is much greater than that needed by those with either mild or moderate ID.
- Possible Living Parameters
 - Will have important relationships with the people in her life.
- Suggested Support
 - May have little or no speech and will rely on gestures, facial expressions, and body language to communicate needs or feelings.
 - Will require functional communication systems (e.g., low or high tech augmentative communication devices) to express wants and needs.
 - Will need visual prompts such as daily schedules and pictures of routines.
 - Will require extensive support with daily living activities throughout life.

CASE STUDY

Kyd

Kyd is a high school freshman. Academically, her core content is at the first- to second-grade level. Her performance is better with concrete rather than abstract thinking. Although she is a freshman, her core subjects are modified to her ability level. She requires direct instruction with oral administration of materials. Manipulatives are used as much as possible to provide her with concrete learning experiences.

*Specific Accommodations/Modifications as
Adopted by the ARD Committee*

- Modified content, work, and tests.
- Access to screen reader and/or other methods of oral administration of materials.
- Frequent review and repetition of materials to assist with retention of materials.
- Access to manipulatives and visuals.

Specific Accommodations/Modifications for Kyd

- To understand the water cycle, Kyd will be provided with a basic picture representing the water cycle (Figure G). After the lesson, she will be provided with three arrows and will place the arrows in the correct sequence.
- Kyd will be provided with frequent review and repetition of materials to assist with her retention of materials.

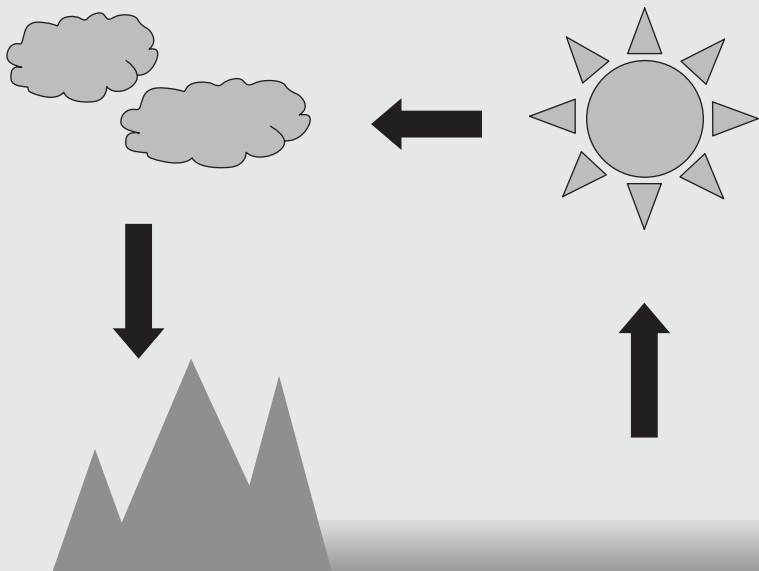


FIGURE G A Basic Picture of the Water Cycle (adapted from Emma Vanstone's "Water Cycle Sheet," <http://www.science-sparks.com/2012/07/30/make-a-mini-water-cycle/>)

Other Health Impairment

Definition Other Health Impairment (OHI) is a blanket term given to a student diagnosed as having a challenge accessing a learning environment, possibly due to a chronic or acute health problem that adversely affects the child's educational performance. A student that is diagnosed as OHI falls into a wide category of possible disabilities, including but not limited to cancer, epilepsy, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD), diabetes, a heart condition, sickle cell anemia, asthma, etc.

Key Characteristics The referral characteristics of an OHI student do not fall into a specific category, but will impact the student's strength, vitality, or alertness. Any of the following may indicate the presence of an OHI:

- A long period of absence due to a health problem.
- An inability to work on a task for the same amount of time as others due to a health problem.
- An inability to work on a task due to medication being given for a health problem.
- An inability to remain at school for extended periods of time due to limited strength or vitality.

Suggested Educational Strategies/Services

- Arrange room to accommodate student equipment.
- Assist with organization of materials and lesson.
- Break tasks into small parts.
- Check knowledge through verbal responses.
- Look at alternatives for excessive writing.
- Modify assignments only as needed and required.

CASE STUDY

Charlie

Charlie is a high school junior. He is identified with an Other Health Impairment condition with deficits noted in the area of attention.

Charlie is taking geometry and is working to solve problems on systems of equations and inequalities. He receives his math instruction in a smaller group environment as he is functioning multiple years below his current grade level. This smaller setting also provides an environment with reduced distractions.

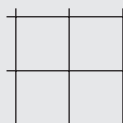
Specific Accommodations/Modifications as Adopted by the ARD Committee

- Task breakdown into smaller tasks.
- Content modifications using state standards of Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS) and modified tests.
- Math manipulatives.
- Note-taking assistance.
- Oral/signed administration.
- Supplemental aids.

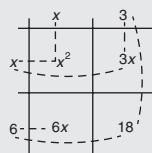
Specific Accommodations/Modifications for Charlie

- Send student home with a set of algebra tiles with instructions on how to solve and explain binomial problems to family members.
- Give student class notes the day prior to new content.
- Provide a completed set of class notes from a peer or teacher (see Figure H).
- Shorten the number of problems to be completed. If the class is expected to complete 20 practice problems, Charlie will complete 10 and then check for accuracy. If additional work is needed to comprehend the content, he could complete the additional problems.
- Allow the use of manipulatives to solve binomial problems.
- Develop a concept map with the student on multiplying binomials (see Figure I).

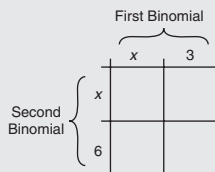
1. To use the box method, create a grid similar to a tic-tac-toe board.



3. Now, multiply each corresponding row and column.



2. Once you have the grid, fill in the binomials across the top and the left side (they can go in either order).



4. Look for like terms and combine them! Here we combined $3x$ and $6x$, which is a total of $9x$

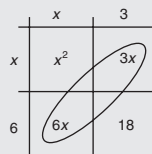


FIGURE H Example of a Completed Set of Notes for Multiplying Binomials (adapted from <http://www.gradeamathhelp.com/math-foil-system.html>)

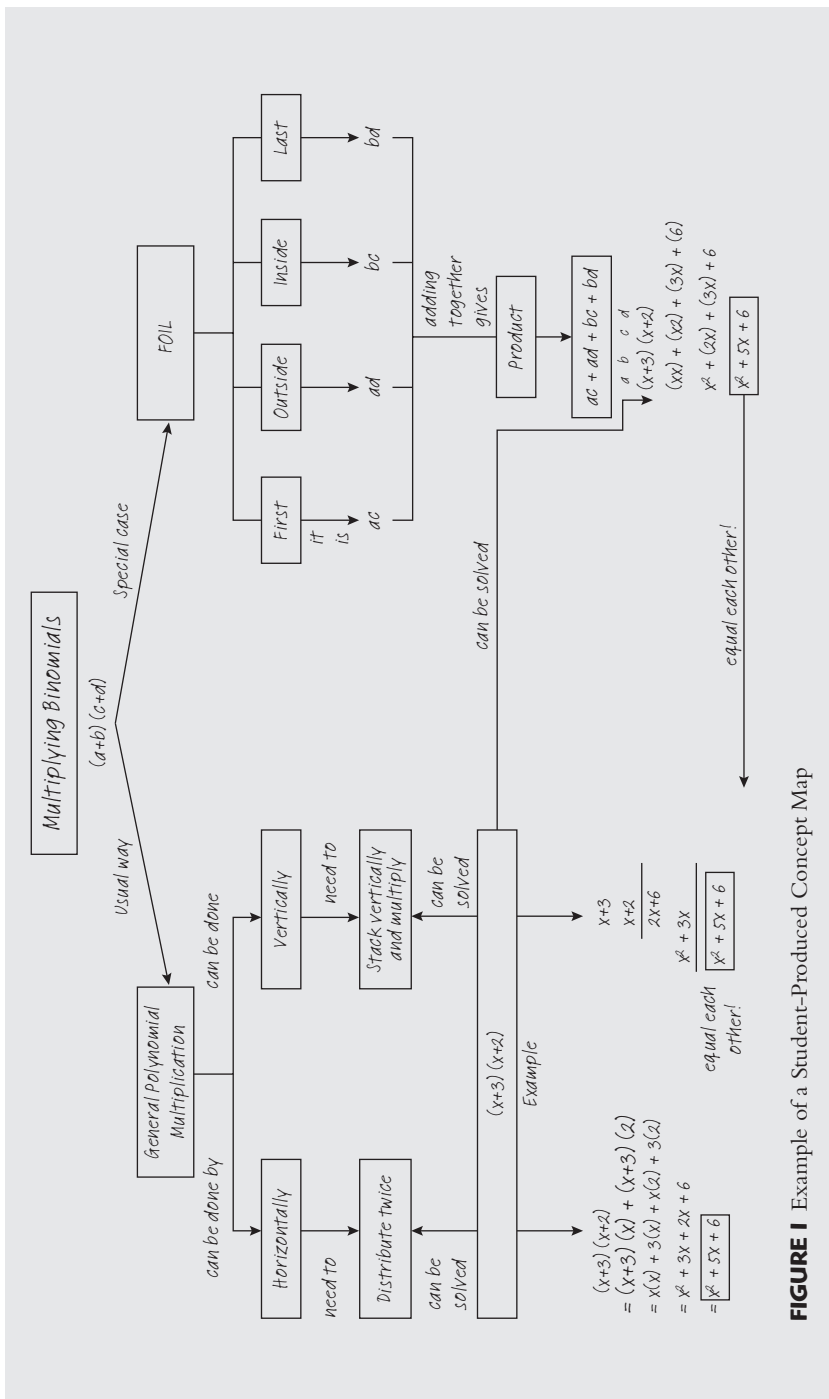


FIGURE I Example of a Student-Produced Concept Map

Orthopedic Impairment

Definition Orthopedic Impairment (OI) is a bodily impairment that is severe enough to negatively affect a child's education performance. The student may need additional supports in the area of self-help skills depending on the severity of the condition. The student may function at an academic level commensurate with his/her same age peers, but may need assistance with such areas as feeding, mobility, or toileting.

Key Characteristics Orthopedic impairment is broken up into three main categories: neuromotor impairments, musculoskeletal disorders, and degenerative diseases.

- Neuromotor impairments are defined as abnormality of, or damage to, the brain, spinal cord, or nervous system that sends impulses to the muscles of the body. The impairment is acquired at or before birth and affects a child's ability to move, use, feel, or control certain parts of the body. Examples of neuromuscular impairments are spina bifida, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, limited limb movement, and/or loss of urinary control.
- Musculoskeletal disorders are defined as defects or diseases of the bones and muscles. Examples of musculoskeletal disorders are limb deficiency, club-foot, and/or juvenile rheumatoid arthritis.
- Degenerative diseases are defined as those progressive conditions that affect motor movement. The most common degenerative disease is muscular dystrophy. Muscular dystrophy is a group of inherited diseases characterized by progressive muscle weakness from degeneration of muscle fibers.

Suggested Educational Strategies/Services

- Common Strategies/Services
 - Special seating arrangements to develop useful posture and movements.
 - Instruction focused on development of gross and fine motor skills.
 - Securing suitable augmentative communication and other assistive devices.
 - Awareness of medical conditions and their effect on the student (e.g., getting tired quickly).
- Assistive Technology
 - Speech recognition software.
 - Screen reading software.
 - Augmentative and alternative communication devices such as communication boards and/or academic software packages for students with disabilities.
 - Canes, walkers, crutches, wheelchairs and/or specialized chairs, desks, and tables to provide assistance with self-help skills.

CASE STUDY

John

John is identified for special education services as a student with an Orthopedic Impairment. Additionally, he struggles in the area of math calculation. Even when he has the correct steps for solving a problem, he struggles with accurate calculations, which impacts his answers. With accommodations in place, he has so far been successful in the regular classroom.

Specific Accommodations/Modifications as Adopted by the ARD Committee

- Use of calculator with larger keys.
- Shortened assignments or frequent breaks.
- Student tests in Content Mastery (CM) for a quiet place.
- Task breakdown into smaller tasks.
- Wheelchair accessible table.
- Access to device such as portable laptop for alternate method of responding.
- Content Mastery (CM) pullout.
- Supplemental aids (charts/pictorials).

An example of the original activity on graphing and altitude is shown in Figure J. Figure K demonstrates a shortened assignment with supplemental aides.

Specific Accommodations/Modifications for John

- The student will be allowed to use a large button calculator if needed, particularly during the game, which is the elaboration portion of the lesson. The teacher will ensure that the student knows the functions of the calculator and how to properly use them.
- During the evaluation part of the lesson, the student will be sent to another room for a quiet place to take the quiz with access to any supplemental aids or process lists.
- The student will be provided with a shortened version of a written practice sheet on which to explain slope. Guiding questions will also be provided for additional support.
- Supplemental aids will be given, including a step-by-step handout with instructions on how to use the Calculator-Based Ranger (CBR) devices.

Partner 1: _____

Partner 2: _____

Partner 3: _____

Explain

Once everyone has drawn their graphs, answer these questions together. Each partner should take a turn to write an answer so that it is evident that everyone worked together. DO NOT have one person write all of the answers.

1. What variables did you measure?
2. Which was the independent variable?
3. Which was the dependent variable?
4. How did you know when to tell your partner to walk toward the CBR?
5. How did you know when to tell your partner to walk away from the CBR?
6. How did you know when to tell your partner to stand still?
7. How did you know where your partner needed to start?

FIGURE J Standard Evaluation Quiz

Name: _____

Practice

1) (a) One of your classmates is absent today. If they come tomorrow, how would you explain what we learned today?

(b) How would you teach your classmate how to walk this graph?



2) (a) Which of the following graphs best represent the altitude (distance from the ground) of an airplane from the time of departure (when the plane takes off) to the time of landing?

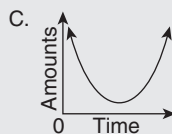
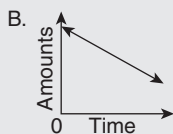
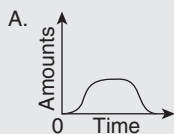


FIGURE K Shortened Version of the Standard Evaluation Quiz

Speech Impairment

Definition Speech Impairment (SI) or language impairment refers to a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Key Characteristics Speech and language impairments may result from hearing loss, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, and/or physical conditions. There may be a range of difficulties from problems with articulation or voice strength to complete absence of voice. Included in this category are difficulties in projection; fluency problems, such as stuttering and stammering; and difficulties in articulating particular words or terms.

When a person has trouble understanding others (receptive language), or sharing thoughts, ideas, and feelings completely (expressive language), then he or

she has a language disorder. A stroke or other physical trauma can result in aphasia, which is the loss of the ability to understand or express speech.

Suggested Educational Strategies/Services

- Give students the opportunity—but do not compel them—to speak in class. Ask students for a cue they can use if they wish to speak.
- Permit students time to speak without unsolicited aid in filling in the gaps in their speech.
- Do not be reluctant to ask students to repeat a statement.
- Address students naturally. Do not assume that they cannot hear or comprehend.
- Patience is the most effective strategy in teaching students with speech disabilities.

Suggested Educational Services/Strategies

- Modifications of assignments such as one-to-one presentation or use of a computer with voice synthesizer.
- Alternative assignment for oral class reports.
- Course substitutions.

CASE STUDY

Jeanny

Jeanny is an exceptional student who has behavioral difficulties in social environments. She was adopted at a young age, homeschooled for several years, and is now attending public middle school. Jeanny meets the criteria for speech-impaired condition. She is currently under assessment for a suspected autism condition that has caused some behavioral problems with authoritative figures and her peers. Previous behavioral problems have included talking back to staff and poking students between transitional periods. These problems are less severe when Jeanny works in structured activities with staff close by to give verbal reminders or prompt appropriate behavior. It should also be noted that Jeanny's behavior has improved over time and that she is adjusting well to middle school.

Specific Accommodations/Modifications as Adopted by the ARD Committee

- Preferential seating near instructor.
- Use of small group for test administration.
- Check for understanding.

- Supplemental aids (mnemonics/multiplication charts, blank graphic organizers for lengthy reading and writing, reminders to stay on task).
- Behavior management plan.
- Modified standards impacting classwork and assessments (e.g., Texas Essential Knowledge and Standards [TEKS]).
- Task breakdown into small chunks.
- In class support.
- Frequent checks for progress and completion of assignments.

Specific Accommodations/Modifications for Jeanny

- Privately discuss with the student her behavior management plan prior to the activity.
- Repeat instructions several times to the entire class and ask students to repeat them back. Setting clear expectations and confirming expectations from all students provides clarity of the assignment.
- On the interactive portion of the lesson, change the number squares to have the vocabulary terms listed out on the diagram.
- Provide visual aid for student and check for accuracy once work is completed.
- Provide the student with the key vocabulary words for the lesson and review the pronunciation with her. Encourage her to create note cards with all the vocabulary terms the night before the lesson. Definition could then be checked with the key as noted below in Figure N. Student could also use those flashcards when walking through the activity if it makes her feel more comfortable when speaking out loud.

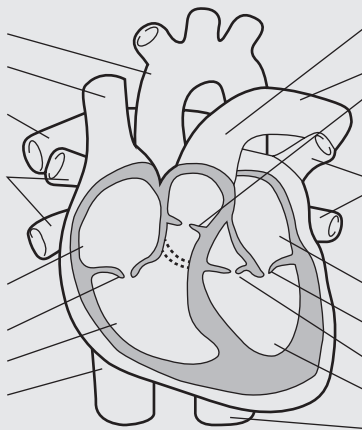


FIGURE L Blank Diagram of the Cardiovascular System

- For the interactive portion of the lesson, have one larger group outside in the hall and another smaller group inside the classroom to minimize distractions.
- Monitor peer interaction and group assignments to promote a positive environment for learning.

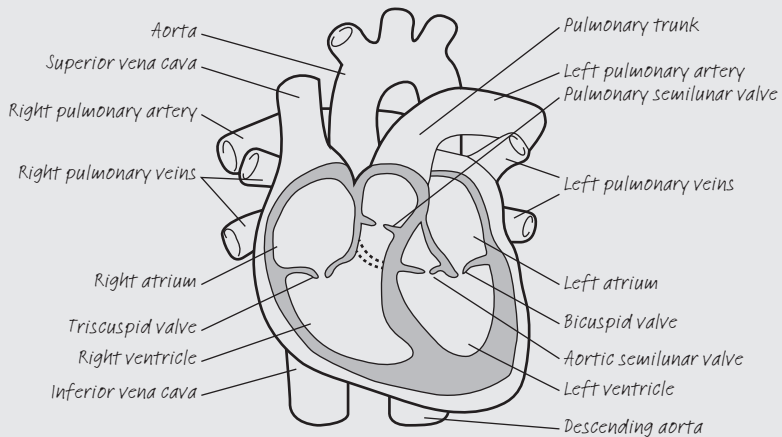


FIGURE M Completed Diagram of the Cardiovascular System

Right atrium, right ventricle, left atrium, left ventricle – the four chambers of the heart that serve to function in blood flow

Tricuspid valve – right side valve located between the atrium and ventricle; all valves prevent the blood from flowing backwards

Bicuspid (or mitral) valve – left side valve located between the atrium and ventricle

Pulmonary semilunar valve – between the pulmonary trunk and right ventricle

Aortic semilunar valve – between the left ventricle and aorta

Chordae tendineae – works with the papillary muscles to keep the valves shut when the ventricle contracts

Aorta – largest artery in the body; receives blood from the left ventricle and sends it out to the body

FIGURE N Flashcard Note Card Example

Specific Learning Disability

Definition Specific Learning Disability (SLD) means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, “that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1995).

Key Characteristics Eligibility under SLD conditions may be in one and/or multiple areas, as noted below.

- Oral expression.
- Listening comprehension.
- Written expression.
- Basic reading skills.
- Reading fluency skills.
- Reading comprehension.
- Mathematics calculation.
- Mathematics problem solving.

Suggested Educational Strategies/Services

- Break learning tasks into small steps.
- Present information visually and verbally.
- Use diagrams, graphics, and pictures to support instruction.
- Model for students.
- Keep oral instructions logical and concise, and reinforce them with brief cue words.
- Present activities that involve all sensory modalities (auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic).

CASE STUDY

Jos

Jos is in the eighth grade. He was recently identified with a specific learning disability condition in the area of math calculation. He struggles with accuracy in basic calculations and often forgets the steps needed to complete multistep math problems.

*Specific Accommodations/Modifications as
Adopted by the ARD Committee*

- Use a small group for test administration.
- Check for understanding.
- Provide supplemental aids: mnemonics/multiplication charts/steps in a process.
- Break tasks into small digestible chunks and check for accuracy.
- Provide in-class support for math and science.

Specific Accommodations/Modifications for Jos

The math class is covering the concept of FOIL (First, Outer, Inner, Last) and applying this to a set of math problems. Jos will be provided with the steps to complete this process as part of a supplemental aid. He will be allowed to use this sheet when completing his problems in class and on the test. It is anticipated that, after using this support throughout the semester, Jos will internalize the FOIL steps by the time the spring exams are taken.

Jos will be provided with a worksheet that includes 15 problems that have been broken into three groups. After each group, Jos will review his calculations so that any additional review and reteaching that is required can be completed. He will have access to the supplemental aid for his quiz on Friday. Depending on his progress during the week, the quiz may have a shortened format and if he does not complete the items before time is called, he will be graded on the work completed to the point that time is called.

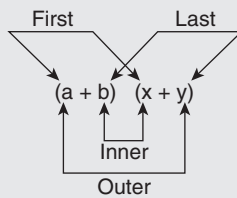


FIGURE O Multiplying Binomials (adapted from Denker, J., “Hints on How to Do Math,” <http://www.av8n.com/physics/math-hints.htm#sec-multi-term-mult>)

Twice Exceptional

Definition Twice-Exceptional students are “students who have outstanding gifts or talents and are capable of high performance, but who also have a disability that affects some aspect of learning” (National Education Association, 2006).

Demonstrating How to Meet the Individual Needs of a Student

Although twice exceptional is not a category used within the federal or state guidelines, it is used in the field of education to help identify those students that need on-level or above-level content with supports due to the disability condition. An example of such a case would be a student who is identified as gifted in the area of math and is taking classes three years above grade level, but the disability condition of Autism impacts his interactions with staff and peers.

Key Characteristics

- Aware of being different.
- Creative or imaginative.
- Emotionally expressive.
- Focus strong, if interested, but unfocused if bored.
- Impatient when having difficulty communicating.
- Strong in areas of interest but meets obstacles due to disability.

Suggested Educational Strategies/Services

- Allow audio recording of lectures if student is easily distracted in class due to disability.
- Allow student to complete assignments using different methods or media (e.g., an assignment could be handwritten instead of typed if the student has difficulty looking at a bright computer screen).
- Display a timer on screen so that the student may pace himself on exams.
- Offer student the opportunity to exploit his particular skills/talents on projects.
- Preprint notes for student if disability prevents rapid note taking during classroom instruction.
- For work on group projects, allow the team to divide the work and temporarily separate if necessary to prevent too many communication problems from arising.

CASE STUDY

Bob

Bob is a student in the tenth grade identified as twice-exceptional. He is classified as gifted and talented as well as autistic. He is allowed to spend five minutes every three weeks with support for Content Mastery and 15 minutes a week to receive Behavior Resource Support (BRS). Two difficulties noted with Bob are inappropriate social interaction and consistently being off-task. In junior high, Bob became loud and argumentative toward staff and peers, demanding that his needs be met immediately

and arguing when he did not get what he wanted or when others did not agree with his point of view. He would frequently interrupt others, make comments to peers or teachers during instruction, or stare away from the center of learning activities. He has displayed these behaviors throughout the school day across multiple settings.

Although Bob has made progress in his overall behavior, he has difficulty relating to peers and understanding social cues. Bob struggles with off-task behavior. Redirection by his teachers is needed throughout each of his classes as he struggles to get work completed on time and to turn in his assignments. In geometry, he usually stays on task. In his engineering class, he gets distracted because he complains that the technology is working slowly. His Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) stated that for the first nine weeks he used 50 minutes of Behavior Resource Support (BRS) and for the second nine weeks he used 45 minutes of BRS.

Bob's BRS time has increased for the current nine weeks due to his frustration. He was upset with two of his teachers and felt like they were not listening to him and/or meeting his needs/accommodations. He struggles with communicating his needs to his teachers. He gets frustrated easily and has trouble expressing that frustration calmly.

*Specific Accommodations/Modifications as
Adopted by the ARD Committee*

- Behavior management plan.
- Content Mastery consult.
- Cooling off period (not more than 10 minutes).
- Extra time (up to one day when using a plan to move on to next item if stuck/unsure).
- Allow work to be turned in as late as the start of the next class day if satisfactory progress isn't made during class.
- Note-taking assistance (exchange given for good faith effort); skeletal notes provided to be completed by the student.
- Preferential seating based on room/task at hand: will consult with student and monitor group dynamics.
- Reminders to stay on task: will remind class of how much should be done at set intervals of time.

Specific Accommodations/Modifications for Bob

Content modifications were not needed for this student because of his identification as a Gifted and Talented Learner. However, a behavior

Demonstrating How to Meet the Individual Needs of a Student

management plan was necessary. Since the behavior management techniques listed in Bob's Special Discipline Plan have been noted to be appropriate, they will be continued. The following techniques are recommended:

- Behavior consultation.
- Cooling-off period (not more than 10 minutes).
- Positive reinforcement.
- Proximity control.
- Verbal praise.
- Visual and verbal cues back to task.

3

Interview with Special Education Expert Jennifer Cantu, Diagnostician, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Texas

As the project evolved, the UNT students began to have questions about a variety of topics related to special education. The student groups were given a set amount of time to ask questions from an authentic source in the field of special education.

Jennifer Cantu was asked to participate in this program to provide authenticity in the answers to the questions proposed. Ms. Cantu was employed as an Educational Diagnostician in one of the larger school districts in the surrounding Dallas area. She graduated from Texas A&M with a bachelor of education in Curriculum and Instruction and a master of education in Educational Psychology. Mrs. Cantu has worked in the special education field for 27 years within the public school setting. During the 2014–2015 school year, she functioned in a variety of educational settings, serving as a teacher (resource, fundamental, coteacher, in class support, Content Mastery, and inclusion), a department head, and an educational diagnostician.

The students, all mathematics and science preservice teachers, had salient questions in the areas of:

- Responsibilities, documentation, and accommodations.
- Assessment, accommodations, and/or modifications.
- Identification of disability and specific accommodations.
- Accommodations and state testing.
- Documentation, teacher traits and training, and advice.
- Support services.
- ARD meetings.
- Service variability.

Responsibilities, Documentation, and Accommodations

Question: Specifically, without the pending changes regarding Texas state testing accommodations, how much responsibility, right now, is on general education teachers?

Answer: As things have changed over the years, there has been more responsibility requested of the general education teacher. Students with special education needs are in the general education classrooms with accommodations and/or modifications more so than they have been in the past. All teachers are being held accountable and documentation is the key. We encourage our teachers to keep a notebook of when they have offered supports for each student and what they have done to support that accommodation/modification. They might provide examples of "This is what everyone received and this is how I changed it for this student." You need to be ready if a parent or administrator ever comes to you and wants to know what you have done, and provide documentation to show that you followed the accommodations or supports noted on the schedule of services page. You can then refer to the notebook, find your proof, and say with confidence, "Yes I did and here it is." That again is the key, documentation.

Question: So in the case that a teacher provides some type of accommodation that is not suggested on any of the paperwork, how does that fall on the teacher? What needs to be done if they see that it works, or should they not do that?

Answer: Accommodations are reviewed at least annually at the ARD meeting. The ARD committee will decide on what needs to be tweaked or not, or if anything needs to be added or deleted based on the supporting evidence. Prior to the meeting teachers are asked to provide input. Some things to consider: What is working? What is not? What has been tried? What needs to be taken off? What needs to be added? So, if teachers have tried and found that something is working and needs to be added, they would submit it or bring it up at the meeting. Teachers are not limited to just doing what is on the accommodation/schedule of services page. If they feel that there is something that might work on a regular basis that is better, they can try it out. If they find that it supports the student in accessing the curriculum and is needed on a regular basis to help the student to be successful, then they need to bring it up so that it can be considered in an ARD meeting. On the other hand, if a student refuses an accommodation simply because he or she does not like it or it is just not working, the teacher should document that it was offered and describe whether or not there is a documented need for that support. Then, we, as the ARD committee, review the data submitted and determine if that support will be offered or not. As the teacher, you provide the documentation of what works and what does not work.

Question: So the only times that the potential changes can be brought up are at an ARD meeting or can other sessions be called into play?

Answer: If there is a request from a parent, adult student, teacher, or outside agency working with the parent to consider changes, then we can hold an additional ARD meeting. We hold an ARD meeting at least once a year to review annual progress, but if we need to hold another meeting, we can. That would then be called a “Review ARD.” However, not all requests necessitate an ARD. There are times when the person with the request can be redirected to another source for additional information or the request is not related to an ARD committee decision.

Question: Do you always have to do what the parent requests, or if the student does not really need it, do you have to do it?

Answer: You are legally obligated to follow the schedule of services. In other words, you have to do what is on the form, what the ARD committee determined is the bottom line for that student. You can document the success or failure with and without the accommodation/modification adopted, and then provide data to report whether this support should continue or not. The easiest example is oral administration. On our campus, students can access a screen reader program that has multiple features. It can read the information to a student as well as highlight vocabulary and manipulate the text so that it creates outlines. Some students absolutely hate the voice on it. They have the ability to change the voice and speed, but some students still do not like the audio output. So, what we have started doing is being more explicit in our notes. We indicated on the schedule of services page where it says *oral administration* how to access the support by arranging for a staff member or the screen reader. If the student absolutely hates the screen reader, we remind them that this is something that they can use in college. If they only want the material read by a staff member then we will delete the “screen reader” note on the accommodation page. The decision to change the level of support is made by the ARD committee with input from the student.

At the end of the day, you are held to that schedule of services page for accommodations/modifications. However, if it is not working or if the student refuses it, then you must gather your documentation and perhaps call a Review ARD meeting to request a review of this support because a change is being considered/proposed. On the other hand, the ARD committee might decide to trial run the change, and then provide the documentation to support officially adding it as a routinely used accommodation.

Question: When you talk about documentation, what exactly do general education teachers need to document?

Answer: Documentation is your proof and backup support. It is crucial, especially in tough situations. Documenting conversations with parents, students, and staff members (both positive and negative) provides a running log of your efforts, especially if there is some area of disagreement.

Document when you provide an accommodation/modification with examples of what was given to everyone and what was given to that particular student so you can prove you made changes to follow that accommodation/schedule of services page. You might even make a copy of the student's test or work so that you can show the work completed.

Emails are another form of documentation as long as you maintain confidentiality! Monitor your comments within your messages because if a parent comes in and asks for a records request, they can pull EVERYTHING off your email. I cannot emphasize that enough. Remember, you are representing the school at all times. You should be prepared to stand behind your words. Always be prepared to “*eat your words*” or, as another person shared, be ready to see it on the front page headlines. This also includes social media comments. Once you put something out there, even if your profile is private, all it takes is one person to “share” your post and then it is out there and can go viral.

Assessment, Accommodations, and/or Modifications

Question: How do teachers assess students with special needs?

Answer: Depending on the district, accommodations may or may not be allowable on any given assessment. For a student with special education supports, a lot depends on the need level of the student as to what type of assessment will be administered. Choices include regular testing, testing with accommodations, or testing with modifications.

All teachers within a district will have access to various tools that are required for assessment. Teachers might use benchmark testing—the district-developed tests for the subject area or teacher-made assessments. In my district at various times during the year, the teachers use the same instrument for testing all students. This is called benchmark testing. This is completed across the district at different grade levels to provide comparisons between classes and schools. The results provide critical information on how students are performing. Students might have access to accommodations for this type of testing depending on the purpose of the assessment and whether the students' accommodations and/or modifications are allowable per district guidelines. Like state testing, there may be options that are allowable for daily class work or tests, but that are not allowable on district and classroom assessment.

Question: What is the difference between accommodations and modifications and which one is better for special needs students in the classroom?

Answer: So again, it depends. Typically when you think of accommodations you are looking at what does the student need to access the general education curriculum and still maintain the content similar to what other general education students are accessing in the district or on your campus. Modifications would be taking that information to the point where, depending on the student's needs, the student may not be completing as much as or in the same depth as the other students. At the high school level, making modifications plays a bigger role because whenever content is modified, it impacts how a student graduates and enters into college. So, it really depends on what the student needs.

Question: Are accommodations and modifications still offered for students with special needs in state- and districtwide assessments?

Answer: Yes and no. TEA, the Texas Education Agency, is in the process of changing allowable supports, both accommodations and modifications. They have discontinued the modified state testing as of the 2014-15 school year. In the past, students with special needs who received modified curriculum (functioning academically about three or more years below their same-age peers) had been allowed to take a modified state test, as adopted by the ARD committee, if they met certain criteria. With No Child Left Behind, there was a push that every student, regardless of disability condition, move toward performing on grade level. I think the magic year was 2013. Of course, 2013 came and not everybody was there. So the state of Texas is moving toward an accommodated assessment, which is going to allow many accommodations to be accessed, but not modifying the content. We are going to have to see how that all plays out. For those with significant disability conditions, there remains an alternate assessment.*

Question: What are alternate assessments and what are the different types?

Answer: If you are talking about state testing, alternate assessments are when students are accountable for the essence of the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) standards. Say you have a student with a significant cognitive disability condition in a high school special education self-contained class working on an algebra credit. The student is held to the standards of working on algebra skills, but might respond to a simplified equation at her ability level using a switch device as an alternative method of responding. This student is working on the very basics of algebra that is at her functioning level. You might not consider this task as algebra, but it is "answering" that is the essence of the TEKS. The state is also in the process of streamlining the alternate version of assessments, and it is anticipated to be in place for the 2014-15 spring assessments.*

* Visit the Texas Education Agency website (https://tea.texas.gov/Student_Testing_and_Accountability/) for the latest updates on accommodations and assessments.

Question: What kinds of accommodations are available?

Answer: There are many possible accommodations depending on the student's needs and on the documentation to support the individual student's needs. The key is to have documentation to support the accommodation. As a general education teacher, your goal would be to document what the student needs to prove that he needs a specific accommodation or not. Sometimes parents will want more than what a student needs. Accommodations should be related to the disability condition and agreed upon based on data that supports the need for the use of that given accommodation. If you are modifying the content significantly below the student's grade level, documentation is equally critical to demonstrate depth of the supports needed for positive growth and understanding.

Question: What should teachers consider when making accommodations?

Answer: You have to consider where you are going with the content. Are you supposed to be accommodating the content or modifying it, and then how successful is the student with or without the accommodations/modification in place. So much depends on the individual student and your documentation of the need for that support, because what works for one student may not work for another.

Identification of Disability and Specific Accommodations

Question: What might restrict a general education teacher's involvement in identifying and accommodating students with disability conditions?

Answer: In our district, we have a SNAP team (Students Needs Assistance Program). The general education teacher would present concerns to the SNAP team. There are so many different factors that could impact why a student is experiencing trouble in school. Simple things could be factors, like the student has wax in her ears and cannot hear instruction or she just entered the country and does not know English. The team would review any contributing factors and decide on the next step. Do they need to contact the parent? Do they need to implement any intervention strategies? How many strategies have been tried? There are many questions that can help with identification for supports prior to consideration of a referral to special education.

Question: If you suspect, as a teacher, a student might need accommodations, what is the course of action for those students?

Answer: Just because accommodations are not on that schedule of services sheet does not mean you cannot try other options. If you find something is working and it helps the student access the content without modification, you need to provide the documentation to the ARD committee to consider

adding this accommodation. When you are faithful with your documentation, then you can present your observations and data to the ARD committee or parent to consider adding, adjusting, or deleting accommodations and/or modifications to support a student.

Question: What steps do I take if I suspect that a student has a disability condition that is undiagnosed?

Answer: This goes back to the procedures that a district might use for identification of struggling students, for example, the SNAP team and/or the Response to Intervention (RTI) program. It is critical in the identification stages to gather documentation to determine what interventions have been tried and to ask yourself if they have been done with fidelity. Also, a common practice to check first is to ask “Can the student see or hear within normal limits?” You would be surprised how often a student has a vision problem and learning is impacted because he just cannot see the board. The student may not be able to express the reason for the struggle because he has never had his vision tested or it has changed over time. I remember one student who could not hear because there was so much wax in her ears. The teacher thought the student was ignoring her or had a cognitive disability condition. I recommended that they take her to the nurse first and that is when we discovered the true problem.

There are other things to consider like sociological status or family dynamics. Has the student moved a lot? Has the student had the opportunity to be exposed to the curriculum? Are there any significant changes in the family dynamics that might be impacting the student at school?

Another big area to consider is language. You might have a student coming from another country that does not speak English. I always tell the students when I am testing them that I have a friend who is Indian. She speaks six languages and her husband, who is Swedish, speaks four languages. If they were to ask me my name in any of those other languages, I would not be able to answer them. Do I know my name? Yes. But I cannot answer their question. It is not because I do not know my name or that I do not have the capacity to answer it, I just cannot speak the language. Conversational language is easier to learn than content language.

Question: Say you have a student and that midway through the year he is diagnosed with a disability condition. How do I handle that and is it different than starting with this knowledge at the beginning of the year?

Answer: You will make the adjustment after receiving the ARD paperwork, which would show what has been recommended from the testing and adopted by the committee. Then, it would be your responsibility to document progress and supports offered or tried. When you attend the next ARD meeting, you should be ready to defend and speak to the question of “Are these accommodations working or not?” Just because they have not

been identified at the beginning of the year, it is okay. Now that the student is identified, you have more information to explain the learning difficulties. You should also have an idea of some basic strategies to support the student by providing the accommodations/modifications as adopted by the ARD committee.

Question: What do I need to do if one of our students appears to no longer need a certain accommodation?

Answer: Good question. I tell our students that my job is to work myself out of a job. I want to make sure that they have everything they need so that when they go to college, they can compensate and/or self-advocate for their disability condition area. They might get to a point that they do not need special education support services. It may happen during middle school, high school, or it may happen after high school. But if they or their teachers feel there is not a need for an accommodation, modification, or support service, then we need to evaluate and consider a trial period to start pulling back on those supports. For example, students on consult support typically have a few to no accommodations. We check grades about every three weeks, and we are typically making a move toward the student supporting himself with a consideration of dismissal in the near future. It balances on the level of support needed for specially designed instruction that can only be provided through special education. A student may still have a disability condition, but he does not have a need for specially designed instruction.

Some students might continue on consult support due to certain accommodations that can only be provided through special education services and are needed to access the curriculum. For example, the student might need a behavior plan and access to the Behavior Resource Service (BRS) staff member. Certain types of accommodations, such as notetaking, might be provided through Section 504, as the student might not demonstrate an educational need for continued specially designed instruction.

Question: How engaged should we, the general educators, be in revising IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) and things of that nature?

Answer: It depends on the support person you have. We have special education teachers that go in every three weeks, some go in every week, or some are in a class every day to support the general education teacher. The special education teacher is typically the one responsible for writing the IEP and the progress reports. The general education teacher provides valuable input on the needs of the student based on the performance observed in the general education setting. Documentation of class performance, grades, accommodations, and supports will help the teacher develop and/or revise goals and supports. Typically, general education teachers do not write IEP progress notes either, but will provide the information and input to support the progress report, which is written by the special education teacher.

Question: As general education teachers who do not hold a special education certification, what are some key things we need to look for to assist in identification of potential disability conditions? How are we supposed to recognize a need for supports?

Answer: You would be looking at many different areas such as:

1. Vision and hearing: When was the last time it was checked? Can they see or hear the materials being presented? Can they hear your instructions?
2. Data analysis: Consider how the student is progressing compared to her peers. Determine what factors are impacting this trend.
3. Parent contact: Find out the student's history. Has the student moved a lot, which could impact access to the curriculum? If the student has been in the same district, were there significant absences? What are the family dynamics that could be impacting performance at school?
4. Language barriers: What is the student's first language? What is the student's language proficiency in his first and second language? Students may be in English classes, but when they go home, their parents do not speak any English. What supports are in place to help them understand the content?

Compare each individual to his peers and find out some of those background questions to help you know if there is something else that is impacting progress and not just a special education consideration.

Accommodations and State Testing

Question: Earlier we talked about the differences between modifications and accommodations. We heard recently that lawmaking is moving away from modifications entirely and moving just toward accommodations. Why is that?

Answer: That is a good question. I do not know that they are removing modifications entirely, but again, with No Child Left Behind, there was a push that everyone would be on grade level by a given year. So groups pushed legislation for everyone to be on grade level. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has decided to make a significant change for 2015. It is kind of a full circle thing.

When I first started in special education, everyone took the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) on grade level, and those students that were significantly below level took either TAKS or a locally developed alternative assessment (LDAA) that was at their level. Then the state saw a need for a more uniform test, so it developed the State Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA). This was an alternative assessment for students who could be provided a test at their current academic functioning level. For example, a student might be in the eighth grade, but based on

functioning levels and the ARD committee decision, could take SDAA at grade level 4 in reading and grade level 6 in math. When the state went away from the SDAA in 2003, it created and implemented TAKS, TAKS-A (TAKS-Accommodated), TAKS-M (TAKS-Modified) and TAKS-Alt (TAKS-Alternate). Then, the state switched to State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) at the elementary and middle school levels and End of Course (EOC) at the high school level. Accommodated, modified, and alternate levels existed within this system. However, 2014-2015 will be the first time where there will only be an on-grade level version with/without accommodations, and an alternate exam, but only for those who have significant cognitive disability conditions.

Currently, the state is back to almost everyone being assessed on grade-level content, while allowing some students to take an accommodated version. Given new software and/or online supports, the content material will be on grade level, but with additional support such as pop-ups for vocabulary and pointing out specific areas to refer to for information, charts, and other visual cues to help the student. For now, you can still have modifications happening in the classroom with modified tests and materials, but then students are going to be expected to take the on-grade level state test with accommodations.

The next thing to watch for is if districts are going to say, "No more modified tests because everyone has to take the accommodated test." So we are in flux again. I do not think the state is totally getting rid of everything, but that is where the trend is moving as of today. For those students with significant cognitive disabilities, there is still the STAAR-Alternative, which modifies the level of questioning to the essence of the content being assessed. The state is working on streamlining this process as well.

Question: So overall with this trend, is it positively or negatively affecting students with disability conditions?

Answer: It is in constant flux. Accountability and setting high expectations are important, but for some students the bar might be set too high. I think that we have always had the opportunity for both positive and negative trends with our state testing. With high school graduation, you currently have to pass five EOC tests. It used to be 11! If students have given a good faith effort, the ARD committee can decide that they have met their participation requirements. This impacts how they graduate, but most of the students not meeting those state testing standards generally start at a community college or technical school. This allows students to graduate with their peers as they have met the basic credit requirements, and have demonstrated an attempt to participate in the state testing.

If you are in General Education, and you do not pass the EOC tests, you have to keep taking them until you pass. We have had some students who are under the special education umbrella in general education classes with accommodations only. They have taken the tests in several different areas,

eight or nine times, and they struggle to meet standards. In my opinion, the lack of a modified test for those students who are already struggling and significantly below level has manifested in increased frustration and lowered self-esteem for them as they consistently struggle to understand the content. I think there is a need for some modifications. Again, that is my opinion, and we will see what the state determines after this next round of changes.

Question: Do you have any idea as to how parents perceive, will perceive, or have perceived all of these changes going on in this state of flux?

Answer: They are confused, and they are frustrated. Some of them feel like the changes are a good thing because their child should be able to do what everyone else does. Others are concerned that there is not going to be enough support to help their child be successful in making continued progress.

Question: Students who had previously received modifications under this law are in flux and modifications will be no longer allowed. Will students be grandfathered in or will they be affected by that change?

Answer: Students, depending on when they started in school, as far as high school goes, could be grandfathered in for previous test versions. We are finishing up our last set of the TAKS takers this year. Hopefully, we will have them all finished this year. So everyone else has to take the EOC tests. But, if last year they took a modified EOC, they now only have the choice of either EOC ACC (on level with accommodations) or EOC (on level) to the best of my knowledge. The problem, as I see it, is TEA works on a December to December schedule, rather than starting in August when school starts. We start making decisions as ARD committee meetings arise, which could be on day one of school. This makes life a little interesting. Sometime in the near future, we should be receiving the guidelines for the new accommodated version and the participation requirements. We will see if our students will meet the criteria for supports and which test might be available to them. The next step will be to determine if the state will allow the ARD committee to consider a student meeting the participation requirements after attempts at retesting. I hope that they will consider keeping this option.

Question: What does all this mean for the general education classroom teacher? Are we going to have to look for more paperwork or less paperwork as far as the legal requirements goes?

Answer: As far as general education teachers, I think it is going to be less paperwork because if the district is moving to not modifying, and just accommodating, they would not have a separate test that is modified. So if you are going to just accommodate, it is going to be, "How do you take that information and break it down to a level where the student might understand it better?" Without modifying the content, but only making accommodations

enables the use of different verbiage and different graphs or pictorials to make the content understandable. I think that is where we will see movement.

Question: I have a question related to the expectation parents have and how to balance that with appropriate services and support. I am sure you see parents that want their student to do the best possible, but they also want maximum-plus support. As a general education teacher, how does that work?

Answer: Documentation is the key. So, when you think about what a parent is interested in, you have to look at, "Is their request something that will modify the content or not? Does it give the student unfair access to the materials that other students might not have, and could it change the advantage?" So you can have high expectations, but you also have to be realistic to provide the information or supports to the student without modifying the content or giving one student an unfair advantage over the other students. It is hard sometimes because you are talking about free and appropriate public education. So what is appropriate and what is not? What a parent wants may not be appropriate to give the student. It may be more than what they really need and that is why documentation is important.

Documentation, Teacher Traits and Training, and Advice

Question: What is the best method of documentation that you have seen from a teacher to prove their work with special education students?

Answer: A notebook about this thick (gestures with hands about six inches apart). You know, honestly, when you have a copy of "This is what I gave the students," and "This is what I gave your child"; and "Here is how they performed"; and, "This is what I did for a re-test." You can just lay it out for them. That is the perfect opportunity to show what you gathered.

If it involves an accommodation in which you cannot show hard evidence, like oral administration, we have students sign a form that indicated, "Yes, I do want oral test administration." Or "No, I do not want to use my support of oral test administration." This can support the teacher in documenting the attempt to provide the accommodations, and the teacher and parent can review how the student performed with or without the accommodation/modification. The results can be reviewed with the ARD committee to consider any proposed changes. Bottom line, contact logs with parent/student/ staff members, charts and graphs, and notebooks of examples are your best documentation.

Question: What traits have you seen in general education teachers that fit best with students who have disability conditions in their classrooms?

Answer: Flexibility, an open mind to try new things, and compassion. Another trait is realizing that sometimes it is not the student you have to deal with

most, it could be the parent. There are many factors that should be taken into account when working with a student that can help a teacher understand a student and why that student might react a certain way.

Question: Any other words of advice for any of us as we enter into our classrooms?

Answer: Good luck.

No, really, you are receiving a lot of information and preparation by going through this program. I commend you for your interest in teaching. I have been in the special education field since I first started teaching. When I started, burnout was usually about seven years. I hear now it is about five years. I love it and I love the students. If you have a passion for people, and the drive, you will keep doing it.

Documentation is one key. Make sure to keep copies of how you implemented the accommodations or modifications. Copies of the student's work can also be beneficial. Keep parent contact logs. There are so many things that go on in a given day or week. If you keep a log of things that happen in class or calls made to inform the parent, you can refer back to them for any support needed.

Use your support people to bounce off ideas, to share celebrations, or to have them listen while you cry on a shoulder, because it does happen. You will have many people to support you, so use them. Do not feel like you are alone in it, because even when you have got that litigious parent, there is always somebody there to back you up.

Question: Do districts generally provide professional development workshops specifically on special education topics for general education teachers?

Answer: I have been in special education for so long so I have not been on the general education side to know how they provide training.

I know that when you receive a new student with special needs, you receive a new "schedule of services" page that indicates what supports and accommodations or modifications are to be provided. One of our special education teachers will sit down with the general education teacher and review what that student needs and answer any questions.

We also provide a general training at the beginning of the year to all teachers to cover a variety of topics, such as sharing how we do things at our campus, how to read a "schedule of services" page, and who to contact if they have questions.

There are also a multitude of trainings offered through different local and regional offices that review disability conditions and how to find supports that all teachers can access. All you have to do is ask. You can always go to your diagnostician and say, "Can I see this student's file?" The diagnostician can help you go through the information and figure out the details of your students with special education needs. Sometimes that is your best route to start with because then you can receive a true picture of what is going on.

Question: When special education students have behavioral plans, are there clearly laid out ways on how to approach certain situations?

Answer: In our district there are. We have a support option called Behavior Resource Services or BRS. BRS will list all the different strategies that you can use and different support levels to assist the student while following the Behavior Intervention Plan(BIP).

Question: Are all support services considered accommodations or are there any that are considered modifications?

Answer: I think of it as “you receive what you need.” Depending on what that need might be, it could be one or the other. Adapted physical education (PE) is going to be modifying the content of a general PE class. Occupational therapy may or may not be a modified support. It depends on the level of support needed. If all that is needed is to work on the student's pencil grip, that may be an accommodation. However, the amount of writing may need to be reduced because that student cannot physically write that long. That change would be considered a modification. So, it again depends on the severity of the need.

Question: Are there going to be modifications in the general education classrooms?

Answer: We really do not know the final decision on where the state is going with the proposed changes in state testing. The goal is to have everyone on grade level and to have students receive the accommodations needed to help them understand the content. But when you have a student who is functioning multiple years below grade level; modifications are likely to be in place in the IEP. Students who struggle with the depth and application of content may not be able to handle everything that the regular class does and will need additional support. The ARD committee will review options and determine the best level of support for that student. This could be in the general education classroom with a special education teacher to support the student and teacher. It could also be in a smaller environment to work on basic skills.

Question: Is it a common issue that students who are learning English as a second language are diagnosed with a disability condition?

Answer: Hopefully not, because we have investigated the impact of another language by testing in the dominant language. Also, the testing results are examined to determine if the deficits(s) are in one or both languages. We have a bilingual assessment team to work in this area. When we look for a specific learning disability (SLD) condition, it is often seen in both languages. So, it depends on how well your assessment team looks into that information, because that is what has happened in the past with students who did not have a comprehensive assessment.

Support Services

Question: What support services are available for students both inside and outside the classroom?

Answer: There are a multitude of supports. If you are under the special education umbrella, related services such as speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and school health services are available. Nursing supports, for example, can range from students that need to be tube fed every day to students that just need to see a nurse for medication management. There are also special transportation services, adapted PE services, and vision services, to name a few.

Physical therapy (PT) would be for students that demonstrate an educational need for physical support in the school setting. This is an educational-based service, as there is a difference between the educational model and the medical model. Supports might include exercise and movement supports such as walking, stretching, and positioning. This might be done in the classroom or during PE time.

Occupational therapy (OT) often works with physical therapy and supports accessing the environment with supports such as positioning chairs, tables, and working on gross and fine motor skills deficits. Many times occupational therapy aligns with writing and fine motor support in the elementary years. Students may learn how to write using different adaptive equipment such as bigger erasers, hand blocks, and pencil grips. They might work on learning how to button or zipper clothes.

Adapted PE supports students that cannot meet the TEKS on grade level in PE and who need some assistance with adapted equipment or with breaking down steps by working in smaller progressive units. For example, these students might learn some of the skills related to baseball. They might start by putting a ball on a tee and learning first just how to tap it, and then how to hit the ball, and then eventually, how to hit the ball, maybe from a string.

We should talk about nursing services and special transportation. Students might need a specialized bus to take them to and from school. They might not be able to ride the regular bus due to safety needs related to cognitive deficits or they might have special equipment such as a wheelchair and need a bus lift. Students with significant emotional needs would be a group that might use transportation services when they cannot handle the big group on the regular bus.

Vision services are another area. Students may need to be taught Braille or access assistive technology for seeing information. Orientation and Mobility (O&M) is mobility training on how to navigate around other environments for student with visual impairments.

Deaf-education services are for students that need to learn how to use sign language or need equipment to assist with their hearing loss.

These are just a few of the services that could be offered to support our students with special needs. There is just so much that is out there.

Question: What about sensory integration?

Answer: Most of those supports start at the elementary level. Many times, once the student starts moving into the general education classroom for core areas, she will start to develop some coping mechanisms and you do not see as much of a need for significant support as a general education teacher. You might have some students that are in a smaller self-contained setting depending on their needs because they cannot handle everything else that is going on in a larger environment. They might need the environment significantly modified to maintain as little distraction or stimulation as possible. Some student can access a general education class with accommodations and behavior supports by using earplugs or headphones to reduce noises, monitoring lighting needs, or being given preferential seating. Every student is different, and you just have to take each as they come and see what works best.

Question: How do you inquire about receiving special services? Who would you talk to if a student had a disability condition? Who would you talk to about receiving those special support services?

Answer: Typically, a student has already had an assessment to determine if there is an educational need for support services. You may have seen this on some of those scheduled services pages you were reviewing under the related service section. This tells you what the student receives as far as the type of service, time, and duration. Sometimes the student is pulled out of class to receive that support service. The special education support staff will contact the general education teacher or come into the class to determine how to adapt the classroom.

For instance, at the beginning of the year, there may be students that have PT or OT and are in the general education classroom. It may be that OT and PT are just going in there and giving the classroom a different desk or a different chair so that the student can access the general education classroom. OT and PT might review supports being used or certain methods to assist in completing work. They might be touching base with you after the year starts as well to see if you see any other support needs to help you in the classroom. If a new concern arises, you could start with any of the support staff who are already working with the student to see if they see a need for additional support or assessment to determine if there is an educational need for support services or changes to the existing plan. The diagnostician is also a good source to go to as he will have the last Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE) that can be reviewed. Sometimes teachers add something and then it turns out to have been assessed already. If the student is in general education and not identified for supports or services, a referral to the SNAP or RTI team to see what those teams have or have not discussed is a

great place to start. Often times, you will find that if one teacher has concerns than others might as well and once you start building your body of evidence, it could lead to RTI supports and/ or a referral in the future. There are so many things these days in place to support students that can be tried before receiving that special education referral.

Question: Who do you talk to, or how can you ask to receive assistive technology for your student?

Answer: There is a lot of assistive technology already within classrooms that students can access. It also depends on the grade level. For example, it used to be that to have access to a calculator on the state test at the elementary or middle school level, it had to be documented on the student's schedule of services page. At the high school level, everyone receives a calculator so you do not have to indicate it for that level. We are waiting for any new changes to accommodations from the state. Also, there has to be documentation and an evaluation to show that there is a need for that service or support. Again, going back to a parent that would like their child to have a word processor, a tablet, or a computer to go with them to class, the bottom line is, "Is there an educational need for that dedicated device backed by a documented assessment?"

ARD Meetings

Question: Are there other types of meeting that involve the general education teachers?

Answer: Sometimes we hold a staffing. A staffing is when a group of people gather to review information and to problem solve regarding a specific area of concern. The staffing could include the assessment person, teachers, administrators, and other people that support the student. The teachers in the meeting look at the documentation provided and figure out what is working, what is not working, and what are the recommendations for any changes based on the documentation provided.

In addition to staffings, there are Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) meetings. In some states, they call the meetings Individualized Educational Planning meetings or IEPs. In Texas we call our goals and objectives the IEP, which are part of the ARD meeting.

You may be asked to participate in different trainings, such as training to learn about accommodations, how to implement programs/ supports, state testing for students with special needs, how to make modifications, etc.

Question: Who is involved in ARD meetings?

Answer: ARD meetings require an administrator, someone from assessment such as a diagnostician, a general education teacher, and a special education

teacher who actually works with that student. Only one ARD committee member is required to represent the general education teacher. It is imperative that you provide any documentation for comments on the student's progress to the ARD committee, which will describe progress made or any difficulties. Usually a request is sent beforehand to all teachers to provide input that is then shared with the ARD committee members to assist in making decisions about supports, accommodations, and/or modifications. The parents or adult students are also required members but they can opt out of their attendance. They can attend in person, or a phone conference can be held. Parents or adult students can also request that the meeting be held without them and that the information be sent home.

Starting in the eighth grade and certainly at the high-school level, we would like to have the student attend the meeting. Eventually we want them to understand their condition and advocate for their needs.

Related and support personnel might also attend, but they are not required members. We have behavior resource specialists that help support the student if they have a behavior plan that supplements the district code of conduct. OT, PT, and adaptive PE support staff are not required, but might attend if we are asking for a review of data. Many times they will send in their information to be reported, as they serve so many schools and could not attend every meeting where they provide services. You might also have different representatives who come in, from supervisors to advocates to lawyers.

Question: When are the ARD meetings? In the fall or the spring?

Answer: It depends on the annual ARD date, which can change due to transfers, when the student is initially identified, realignment, or whenever the student's last annual review occurred, which could be in the fall or the spring. If a student transfers to a new district in the fall and has a fall annual ARD, the ARD committee may decide that in late spring they want to review progress and consider changes. At that time, they might decide to align the annual to the spring since they are already coming back to review progress from the year.

Question: You had said that we could call an ARD meeting?

Answer: You can request a meeting, but before you make that request you need to meet with the special education person who is supporting you in the classroom to share your observations. You might share things like: "This is what I am seeing. This is what I have been doing. This is what is working. This is what is not working." You can share your parent and student contact log and any results. You will work as a team to determine if there is anything that can be considered or investigated, or anything that is missing, before going to an ARD. It may be that you do not have to go to an ARD. Sometimes it can be as simple as a parent contact or a review of the file to

see what has already been investigated. There are also many things that can be tried that do not need an ARD to be put into place. Remember, documentation and supporting evidence is the key. It is like going to the SNAP team and problem solving before going through the referral process.

Question: Is there any advice you would give us as teachers going into one of these meetings, especially with regard to parents?

Answer: You want to make sure that if you are asked for input beforehand, that you send in that input. Remember, you may not be the teacher who is requested to attend. You want to make sure that the information provided is clear. If you know there is a potential issue, you should address that in your comments and offer potential solutions. For example, if the student is failing your class, you might note that you have offered (and documented) extra tutorials but the student has not attended to date. Some students will tell their parents they are attending when they are not.

Try to try to start all conversations or notes to parents or students with the positive and then go into what may or may not be going on in the classroom and then where improvements are needed. Make sure you contact the parents before an ARD if you are having difficulty, and do not wait until an ARD, especially if you are not attending the ARD.

If you are nervous about presenting information, role play with someone. Ask them if they understand your points and if they have any questions. Ask them if they have any recommendations on how to present the points you have shared. Remember, you are the expert in the classroom.

Remember too that, just as with emails, you need to be mindful of your comments. It is not that you want to hide anything, but sometimes the best intention or phrasing can be taken out of context and opens you up for a tense situation to get worse.

Question: What do you do when the parents do not agree with something after the meeting?

Answer: Usually, it happens during a meeting and that is okay. They do not have to agree. We give them something called a notice of procedural safeguards that is basically the rules the committee follows. We offer them the opportunity for a 10-day recess, which means we schedule a meeting within 10 school days. During that time both sides gather up any additional information to support their side and then we go back to ARD to review any new information. If the parent is still in disagreement, we give them another copy of the safeguards. This includes the steps they can follow after the meeting if they remain in disagreement, from doing nothing to filing a complaint with TEA. The goal would be to find common ground and to end in agreement, but sometimes that just does not happen.

Question: Do these meetings happen before the school year begins or during the school year?

Answer: They can happen all year long. It just depends on when that annual ARD date falls or when there is a need to review services or supports. In our district, we like to hold ARD meetings during the general education teacher's conference period. Typically we do it then instead of during our special education conference period because it is almost impossible to find two teachers with the same off period. We start with the 45-minute period and most of the time we can complete it then. But, there are those cases where it does not happen. I can tell you that I have some ARDs that span five to six meetings lasting three hours a piece. This is not typical.

Question: Are there circumstances where you do not want the student there nor do you generally want the student's parents there?

Answer: Typically, the really young students do not attend. Once they can understand more of the process and hold meaningful conversation, it is a better time to have them attend. Most of our licensed specialists in school psychology (LSSPs) do not like the student to be in there when the student is really young, particularly when they are reviewing reports on whether the student meets emotional disturbance qualifications. When students get older, they are asked to participate because the LSSP wants the student to also know the area of deficit and how to use compensation strategies.

Question: What do you do if the parent does not want the student to be there, but the rest of the faculty does?

Answer: We encourage the parents to let the student come to the meeting, but ultimately it is their choice until the student becomes a legal adult. At that time, the student can let the parents continue to speak on his behalf if he so chooses. The student would put that request in writing. Either way, the parents receive notification of the meeting.

Service Variability

Question: How do special education services vary from district to district?

Answer: Services vary by districts based on funding and population. Your population is going to affect how much funding you receive. Then, there is availability of services. Sometimes you will have a related service staff member who will travel between districts because the district is so far out of the way that it does not have enough students to support having one person full time in that area or the need is not great enough to have a full-time staff person serve one district.

Question: If a school district is not able to meet a particular need, does the student and the student's family have the option of demanding, through legal action, that services be made available or do they have the option of transferring to a different school?

Answer: Parents always have the option of legal counsel. I would say that a district would try to find a way to meet the needs of the student before that happened. For example, in our district, we combine Deaf Education Itinerate service with a neighboring district, due to the limited number of students needing this type of support. So, you may find that surrounding districts may cooperate to provide some of those supports.

Question: Would you say that the goal is to ensure that all people with special needs are able to have their needs met by their school districts and by their local communities?

Answer: Yes

Question: We know that some disabilities become very apparent at particular ages. Some develop over time and are less noticeable at one time than at another. How do special education services vary, not only by location, but also by age? For example, elementary school versus high school?

Answer: Services are based on the needs of the student. Depending on the number of students with a particular type of need, programming may be available on the home campus or students may be bussed to a central location. At our high school we recently combined two campuses so that a few students in one program are now part of a larger group. Although this larger group in total is still under 15 students, it allows for the few that were in one class to participate in a larger setting with their peers. We have many different programs that are offered at each level and to different degrees. You might find more self-contained type classes at the elementary age as significant cognitive and developmental disabilities are more noticeable at that age and compensations skills are limited. As these students learn and develop, you may find that they no longer need such a restrictive environment because they have learned communication and/or compensation strategies that allow for them to be in a less restrictive environment. As you move into late elementary and middle school, you might have more students being identified for specific learning disability conditions as the content starts increasing in complexity and demands change to higher-level reasoning skills. This means more accommodations and/or modifications in core classes. Again, programming supports depend on the needs of the student. Many times we make combinations of various supports to meet the needs of the student.

4

Acquiring Special Education Certification in Texas

If an individual has a valid Texas classroom teaching certificate and a bachelor's degree, additional classroom certification areas can be acquired by completing the appropriate examinations. For special education, some states require a master's degree, but most, including Texas, only require a bachelor's degree. To prepare for the exam, study guides and other supplemental materials are available for purchase. If purchasing study materials is not possible, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) website (www.texas-ets.org) has a variety of free preparation resources.*

Individuals can register for the special education exam through the Educational Testing Service Online Center (www.texas-ets.org). After passing the test, the individual may verify exam scores and apply for the corresponding certificate through his Texas Education Association (TEA) educator account under the "Certificate by Exam" tab (<https://secure.sbec.state.tx.us/SBECOnline/login.asp>) (J. Powell, personal communication, October 2, 2014).

Test Options

There are two special education certifications: EC-12, and special education supplemental certification (SBEC, n.d.). The special education EC-12 certification qualifies an individual to teach children with special needs from early childhood to twelfth grade. The special education supplemental certification certifies the teacher to teach special education only in the grades in which they are

* ETS is a nonprofit testing company with which the state of Texas works to administer state certificate tests.

currently certified to teach (J. Powell, personal communication, October 2, 2014). For example, if a teacher has received a chemistry 7–12 certification, then earns a special education supplemental certification, he will be certified to teach special education in chemistry-related classes only in grades 7–12.

The Special Education EC–12 test comprises 135 multiple-choice questions over four domains and twelve competencies. The four domains are

1. understanding individuals with disabilities and evaluating their needs (13% of the test),
2. promoting student learning and development (33% of the test),
3. promoting student achievement in English language arts and reading and in mathematics (33% of the test), and
4. foundations and professional roles and responsibilities (20% of the test).

Available in paper-based or computer-administered form, 120 of the 135 questions are scored. The final scaled score is based on only the questions scored and is not found by dividing the number of questions correctly answered (the “raw score”) by the total number of questions (TEA, 2010). Rather, the scaled score is found by placing the form of test on a scale common to all forms of the same TExES test. Although every effort is made to make the tests of the same difficulty, no two tests can have exactly the same difficulty. Thus, to pass the test, an individual who takes an easier form of the test needs to correctly answer more questions than someone who takes a harder form (Intern Teacher A.C.P., n.d.). All possible scores are reported on a scale between 100 and 300, with 240 being the minimum passing grade (SBEC, n.d.).

The computer-administered Special Education Supplemental test comprises 100 multiple-choice questions (TEA, 2014). Three domains and ten competencies are tested. The three domains are

1. understanding individuals with disabilities and evaluating their needs (20% of the test),
2. promoting student learning and development (50% of the test), and
3. foundations and professional roles and responsibilities (30% of the test).

Of the 100 questions, 80 are scored (TEA, 2014). Again, only the scored questions are included in the final scaled score. The final scaled score is calculated using the same procedure as the Special Education EC–12 certification (SBEC, n.d.).

Requirements for Obtaining Additional Certification

According to the Educator Certification Online System (ECOS, n.d.), to receive additional certification by examination in Texas, an individual must:

Acquiring Special Education Certification in Texas

- hold a valid Standard, Provisional, Professional, or One-Year classroom teaching certificate,
- hold a bachelor's degree or higher,
- apply for additional certification by examination online,
- have passed one or more qualifying exams for a classroom teaching certificate,
- pay a certification fee (only one fee is required to issue all certificates on one application),
- submit fingerprints with TEA, and
- pass a criminal background check.

Once the background check has cleared and the application is processed, TEA issues the Special Education Certificate

Specific Steps Required for Additional Certification by Examination

- The name on the certificate must match the photo I.D. that will be shown at the testing site. Contact TEA to complete a name change far in advance of taking an exam, if needed (http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Certification/Contact_Educator_Certification/Email_Educator_Certification_and_Testing/)
- Register for the exam through Educational Testing Services (www.TEXES-ets.org). Note that TEA is *not* the testing company.
- Testing candidates log in to their TEA account, verify their passing scores, select Applications, then select Additional Certification by Examination and complete the application.

Once the steps are completed, the new certificate area will be added to the individual's existing certificates pending a clean background check.

Educator Preparation Program Candidates

An undergraduate in a teacher preparation program is an Educator Preparation Program (EPP) candidate. Approval for testing must come from the teacher preparation program. For example, Teach North Texas (TNT) is a teacher preparation program that has the authority to approve testing for mathematics and science majors only. First-time testing candidates must go to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website (<http://tea.texas.gov/>) and create an account. As part of the account creation, an Educator Profile will be required and a TEA ID number will be assigned (<http://cms.texas-ets.org/texas/registrationinformation/>

#Creating_Your_ETS_Testing_Account). Approved examinations will be available under the Educator Profile “View Examinations.”

Once the exam has been approved, the testing candidate will go to the ETS online registration system (https://www.TExES-ets.org/custom/public/pp_log.php) and create an ETS testing account. Registering to test is done through the ETS testing account.

Teacher candidates who have already taken a Texas Educator Certification test and who want to register for a test not previously approved must get approval from the EPP. Once approved to test, candidates can go to their established ETS testing account (http://cms.TExES-ets.org/your_account/) and register for the test.

Out-of-State/Out-of-Country Candidates

Credentials for out-of-state or out-of-country candidates are reviewed before test registration occurs. To have credentials reviewed, these candidates must go to the TEA website, create an Educator Profile, click on *Creating Your TEA Account*, complete an online application for review of credentials and submit the appropriate documents by mail to TEA.

After the review of credentials is complete, information regarding the approved tests will be emailed to the candidate. Approved examinations may be viewed in the Educator Profile under *View Examinations* to confirm eligibility to test.

Certification-by-Exam Candidates

Certification-by-Exam candidates already have a certificate to teach in Texas and may already have an Educator Profile on the TEA website and a TEA ID number. These candidates should use their TEA ID number to create an ETS testing account and register for an exam on the ETS TExES website. A list of exams that each candidate is eligible to take will be displayed in the ETS testing account, where test registration will also take place. TEA ID numbers may be retrieved on the Educator Profile pages on the TEA website. For candidates with teaching certificates issued before 2002, an Educator Profile must be created on the TEA website to obtain a TEA ID number.

Charter School Candidates

Charter school candidates do not need to create an Educator Profile on the TEA website. These candidates will receive their TEA ID number when creating their ETS testing account and registering to test. A list of exams that they are eligible

to take will be displayed in the ETS testing account, where test registration will take place.

Temporary Teacher Certificate Candidates

Temporary Teacher Certificate candidates must confirm TEA approval for the employing entity or school. Once confirmation is complete, the testing candidate must go to the TEA website and create an account. An Educator Profile will be completed when the account is created and a TEA ID number will be issued.

After entering the Educator Profile information, the candidate must request a Review of Transcripts and submit an application. After TEA reviews the candidate's credentials, it will notify the candidate of the appropriate 7-12 TExES content exam in addition to the Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities EC-12 test. Approved examinations may be viewed in the TEA Educator Profile under *View Examinations* to confirm test eligibility.

Benefits of Special Education Certification

Acquiring an additional certification in special education carries multiple benefits. Perhaps the greatest of these is the increased ability to meet the individual needs of all students in one's classroom. Other possible benefits include:

- **Broad marketability:** This secondary certification may open doors to multiple opportunities in a school setting as it shows versatility and expertise within the area of differentiation.
- **Career security:** The needs of students on a campus are diverse, and holding multiple certifications provides numerous pathways for individuals to serve them. Administrators may be inclined to view a teacher's diverse skill set as more beneficial than those of the teacher's peers who are not certified in special education.
- **Leadership expertise:** By acquiring a special education certification beyond the initial content certification required, the individual demonstrates a commitment to continuing education and professional development. It also:
 - Demonstrates a dedication to individuals in the learning environment, which is often associated with excellence.
 - Distinguishes individuals as leaders, both in the field and in the community.
 - Exemplifies a dedication to continued excellence in professional practice.
 - Exemplifies a dedication to the field of education and special education that is above and beyond what is required.

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- Places the individual among an elite group of professionals who meet rigorous professional development standards.
- Potential higher salary: Some districts rely on demographics, experience, and academic degrees to determine the amount of stipend one might accrue. Some school districts offer incentives for becoming certified in special education.
- Potential loan cancellation for practicing special education teachers: Individuals who decide to become certified in the area of special education as well as general education could qualify for cancellation of up to 100% of their federal Perkins loan. The percentage will depend on the number of years of teaching experience, and the cancellation will occur in increments. Also, for candidates who do qualify for the loan cancellation, other loans can be deferred while teaching full-time.

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