

Improving Performance

for

Special Education Students

**With Curriculum Matrix Data
for
Meeting AYP**



**Special Education Institute
International Center for Leadership in Education**

Please visit www.LeaderEd.com and click on Curriculum Matrix on the navigation bar to view sample charts from the Curriculum Matrix for your state.



© 2005 International Center for Leadership in Education
1587 Route 146 • Rexford, New York 12148
(518) 399-2776 • fax (518) 399-7607
www.LeaderEd.com • info@LeaderEd.com

Contents

Overview	v
Chapter 1 Giving Special Education Students Their Due	1
A Legislative Perspective	1
A Changing Work World	5
The Gap and How to Fix It	8
Learning from Successful Schools	9
Staying Current	13
Strategies to Improve Results	13
Summary	15
Chapter 2 Assessment Tool for Program Effectiveness	19
Introduction	19
Planning/Implementing Programs Assessment Charts	19
Planning/Implementing Programs Action Steps	24
Aligning Professional Development Assessment Charts	30
Aligning Professional Development Action Steps	37
Support Systems Assessment Charts	44
Support Systems Action Steps	48
Awareness and Conscious Design in Central Service Areas	51
Chapter 3 Strategies to Improve Outcomes for Students	55
Introduction	55
Overview of North Colton Central School District	55
Suggestions for Elementary School Students	60
Suggestions for Middle School Students	85
Suggestions for High School Students	107
Behavior Management in the School	120
Chapter 4 Using Data to Improve Performance	143
Defining What to Teach	143
Curriculum Survey of Essential Skills	148
Using the Curriculum Matrix	153
Understanding Standards	156
Special Educators as Content Area Specialists	161
Chapter 5 Developing Skills to Use the Curriculum Matrix	165
Introduction	165
List of Activities	166
1. Using the Curriculum Matrix	167
2. Analyzing the Test	169
3. Valuing a Curriculum Map	172
4. Developing a Curriculum Map	175
5. Scaffolding Skills	176
6. Linking Standards and Student Work	179
7. Analyzing Students' Performance on the Test	183
8. Becoming Familiar with Content Areas	186

Chapter 6	Tackling Implementation Issues	187
	Frequently Asked Questions	187
Chapter 7	State Curriculum Matrix	197
	Introduction	197
	Using Data to Inform Curricular Decisions for Students with Disabilities	198
	Using the Curriculum Matrix	199
	Curriculum Survey of Essential Skills	200

Appendix

Overview

This resource kit is intended to assist administrators and teachers in improving the performance of students with disabilities taking part in the general education curriculum and related state assessment programs. It includes a discussion of raising expectations for students with disabilities, an assessment tool related to effective instructional programs for these students, and practical ideas for K-12 classrooms to help improve student performance. The section on using data to improve performance has staff development activities and the state-specific K-12 Curriculum Matrix for English language arts, mathematics, and science.

Chapter 1 - Giving Special Education Students Their Due

The vast majority of students identified as needing special education — about 80-85% — are in categories that by definition involve at least average intellectual capability. Given this population, there appears to be no reason why performance is so low, other than the low expectations that prevail in the systems that serve them, the limited opportunities provided to them to be challenged, and the strategies that have been used to meet their educational needs. While the legal obligation to focus on improved performance for these students is persuasive, the work world provides an equally strong reason to do so: the “safety net” of low-skill entry-level jobs is disappearing. This chapter presents a compelling case for wholesale improvements in the academic preparation of special education students.

Chapter 2 - Assessment Tool for Program Effectiveness

In order to make decisions about where to focus self-improvement efforts, school districts need to assess carefully their strengths and weaknesses. This chapter provides a construct for conducting that self-assessment using charts related to the key areas of program planning, implementation, professional development, and district support systems. Descriptive information about these key areas and ideas for taking action based on assessment results are included.

These charts are also on the enclosed CD-ROM.

Chapter 3

Strategies to Improve Outcomes for Students

The strategies, suggestions, and procedures described in this chapter were shared by special education teachers and administrators of the North Colonie Central School District in New York. This district has experienced considerable success in improving the performance of their special education students in the general education curriculum as measured by their performance on the state tests. The chapter offers suggestions for elementary school, middle school, and high school students as well as a section on behavior management.

Chapter 4

Using Data to Improve Performance

Most curricula have more content than can be taught in the time allotted in a school year. For special education teachers, this problem is compounded by the issue of how to present the mandated curriculum while adapting instructional strategies to maximize their students' mastery. This chapter helps to answer the question of what to teach in an overcrowded curriculum and introduces the Curriculum Matrix, which assigns a priority rating to a state's standards/benchmarks in English, math, and science based on (1) the emphasis given that standard on state tests and (2) the importance of that knowledge/skill relative to what graduates need for success in adult life.

Chapter 5

Developing Skills to Use the Curriculum Matrix

This chapter provides some suggested staff development activities that can be utilized either on a schoolwide level or within individual departments. Both special educators and regular educators can benefit from participation in these activities. All staff in a school building should understand the role they can play to improve the performance of students with disabilities.

Chapter 6

Tackling Implementation Issues

Certain questions come up repeatedly once administrators are convinced that it is possible to raise achievement levels for their students with disabilities. This chapter answers those questions, such as: How do I improve the performance of students with disabilities in my district? Where do I begin? What data are most useful? What is the best way to provide the most relevant staff development while demanding better student performance? How do we upgrade our programs for students with disabilities, and how do we decide which programs and strategies to use?

Chapter 7

State Curriculum Matrix

This chapter contains the K-12 state-specific Curriculum Matrix, which crosswalks state standards to state tests and to the essential skills in English, mathematics, and science. State summary charts are also provided.

Appendix

The Appendix contains the ranked results of the Curriculum Survey of Essential Skills for English language arts, mathematics, and science.

Given the population of students in special education today, there appears to be no reason why performance is so low, other than low expectations, limited opportunities, and insufficient focus on their educational needs. This resource kit can help to reverse this situation.

– *Larry Gloeckler*
Executive Director
Special Education Institute

Chapter 1

Giving Special Education Students Their Due

A Legislative Perspective

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) has exposed a significant problem that our schools have had in educating certain groups of students. Often, the group showing the most serious gap in educational performance has been students with disabilities. While many plausible explanations are offered for the size of this performance gap, there is also growing recognition that the gap should not be as wide as it is.

The 1997 reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its subsequent reauthorization in 2004, which strengthened the connections with NCLB, placed the spotlight squarely on the performance of these students.

IDEA set out a vision for students with disabilities that cannot be realized without substantial improvement in educational performance by these students. It calls for the education system to prepare these students to:

- live independently
- enjoy self-determination
- make choices
- pursue meaningful careers
- enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of society

These are laudable goals, but we are a long way from reaching them. In fact, data tell us that our education programs have instead had the result that too many of these students leave school and:

- work only part-time
- live in poverty

- have little access to such benefits as health insurance for their families
- are unprepared to pursue postsecondary education

In fact, a report issued in 2000 by the Technical Assistance Center, Inc. and the Citizens with Disabilities Task Force indicated that fewer than 5% of people with disabilities own their own home. The “American Dream” has been out of reach for this population. While the U.S. unemployment rate generally falls below 6%, national surveys peg the unemployment rate for people with disabilities at 60% or more. Yet, there is no public outrage at this incredibly high rate. Could it be that the low expectations we have held for students with disabilities in our education system permeate their adult lives as well?

However, data emerging from states and from the work that the International Center for Leadership in Education and its Special Education Institute have conducted with model schools throughout the country are encouraging. Performance for students with disabilities is on the upswing at the elementary level. While the data are not yet as promising at the middle or high school levels, schools are being identified that have managed to improve results and reduce the gap between their general education performance and their results for their students with disabilities.

As part of the International Center’s overall goal of increasing access for all students to a rigorous and relevant curriculum, the Special Education Institute operates within a set of beliefs that drives all of its work in helping states and districts to improve their services and subsequent results for these students.

Since its founding in 1991, the International Center for Leadership in Education has had the mission of a rigorous and relevant education for all students.

The Special Education Institute believes that:

- all children can learn
- not every child with a disability can meet general education standards, but most can
- more students with disabilities can meet standards than we have expected
- many more students with disabilities can meet standards than have so far
- the expectations of the education system for these students is too low

Many general and special educators were trained to think about the potential of students receiving special education services very differently from what experience with high-performing schools shows can happen. Furthermore, these educators have a long way to go in understanding the world in which today's students will live. As understanding increases, it will reinforce why schools must improve performance — in order to give students with disabilities greater opportunities to reach the vision the laws have set out for them.

Chapter 2

Assessment Tool for Program Effectiveness

Introduction

In order to improve program effectiveness and student performance, school districts need to assess carefully their strengths and weaknesses in order to make decisions about where to focus their self-improvement efforts. This chapter provides a construct for conducting that self-assessment through assessment charts that focus on key areas of program planning, implementation, professional development, and district support systems. Descriptive information about these key areas and ideas for taking action based on assessment results are included.

It is essential that a district conduct a thorough needs assessment before it sets in motion efforts to reform its services to students with disabilities. Improving performance takes careful strategic implementation and persistence over time. Starting down a path of change based on intuitive notions about what is needed or with lack of understanding of how key system components are operating can lead to wasted resources and effort and a sense that improved performance is not possible. Districts that are succeeding use detailed data analysis and strategic implementation based on that analysis to significantly improve achievement over time.

Curriculum and Instruction

Essential Question

What framework is agreed upon as the foundation for rigorous curriculum and standards-based instruction?

Importance low ⇌ high 1 2 3 4	CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION	Level of Attainment low ⇌ high 1 2 3 4
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	A. The district has high expectations for the performance of all students.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	B. The district has a written curriculum for preK - 12.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	C. The curriculum is standards-based and prioritized so that skill development is vertically aligned from the elementary to the secondary level.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	D. There is a common understanding of good practices across the district.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	E. The district monitors the implementation of agreed upon good practices and adjusts professional development to address areas of need.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	F. The district has specialized programs or curricula that address the needs of struggling students.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	G. There are opportunities for extended learning after school, before school, and/or Saturdays.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	H. Individual student assessment data is used to inform instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	I. Teachers plan collaboratively and use consistent strategies <i>within</i> a content area or grade level.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	J. Teachers plan collaboratively and use consistent strategies <i>across</i> content areas and grade levels.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	K. An emphasis on literacy and getting meaning from text is prevalent in every classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	L. Looking at student work is a common practice to build an understanding of effective teaching and learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	M. Rigorous curriculum and varied instructional resources are in place across classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	N. Instructional technology is available and widely used in classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	O. General education faculty are the first line of support for students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	P. General education and special education faculty work as a team and core academic subjects are taught by general education teachers with support of special education teachers or in a co-teaching arrangement.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Enhancing Teaching of New Material

The following suggestions are especially helpful in teaching students with attention or auditory processing difficulties.

- Give a variety of cues including hand gestures, auditory prompts to look at you, and touching the student gently to gain/sustain attention.
- Keep your language simple. Keep sentences short and concise. If you are using new or more sophisticated vocabulary, give the definition along with the new word.
- Make sure you give enough wait time. Many students with disabilities are trying to think about the question while their peers are already formulating their answers. These students need additional time to process information.
- Make sure you model your thinking process and tell them you are doing so. Many children think answers “automatically” pop into our heads.
- Make sure students understand directions by giving them in several different ways: verbally, written, and with picture cues if appropriate. For example, if you want students to use a ruler, pair a picture of a ruler with the written direction.
- Check for understanding frequently. Clarify immediately and redirect as appropriate.
- Remember to utilize multisensory techniques as often as possible.
- Students love to use dry-erase boards and markers, which can take the tedium out of written responses. The boards are useful for spelling words, math facts and computation problems, formulating questions, and writing responses to reading.

E L E M E N T A R Y

- Use different color markers on dry-erase boards to emphasize different concepts while you teach.
- When asking students to respond, give them choices in regard to format or modality.
- Give students choices (several or either/or) when introducing new information.
- Vary your activities when teaching new material. Activities may be more meaningful if they are short and brief and offer students a variety of ways to respond.
- Plan for small group work. Students can be paired or placed into small groups for discussion and quizzing.
- Use graphic organizers while you teach. Provide students with a variety of graphic organizers and teach them how to choose the graphic organizer that best fits what they are learning. Model how to use the organizer on the blackboard or dry-erase board. Teach them how to copy on their own paper the format of the graphic organizer they feel is most appropriate for the task. This will help them during testing when they need to organize and summarize information into a format they can readily access to answer questions.
- Remember to give ample time for an introduction to the lesson. Allow students to discuss their experiences and what they may already know about the material. When possible, assist children to make connection between the material and their own experiences.
- Students love games. Whenever possible, review lessons in a game format. Rotate roles so that everyone gets a different point of view and opportunity to respond.

Note-taking Strategies

Another important skill is note-taking. Students need to learn how to identify key concepts and important details. Students should use their notes for studying for tests; to organize materials to prepare for tests; and to identify key terms, people, dates, and places. Note-taking also helps to improve students' comprehension of information.

The following are recommendations for note-taking:

1. Coordinate methods used for note-taking across subjects and grades to provide consistency throughout the school.
2. Provide instruction in note-taking and time to practice.
3. Teach students the purpose for taking notes.
4. Teach students how to organize their notes.
5. Teach students how to use notes to prepare study guides.
6. Teach effective note-taking methods such as:
 - a. Graphic organizers
 - b. SNQR (Survey/Note-taking/Question Writing/Review Questions)
 - c. Outlining techniques

Test-taking Strategies

The following instructions on types of questions are helpful to students in testing situations. Be sure to monitor the use of scannable answer sheets to be sure students are using them correctly.

M
I
D
D
L
E

L
E
V
E
L

True-False Questions

- Read each question very carefully and look for factors that will make it false.
- Absolute terms often make a question false (all, never, always).
- Look for qualifiers that often make a question true (some, many, frequently).
- Look for negative words and determine if they change the meaning of the statement.

Matching Questions

- Read both lists carefully.
- Answer the questions you know first.
- Cross out choices as they are used.
- Develop methods to organize your thinking.

Multiple-choice Questions

- Read each question thoroughly and cover up the answers. Try to answer the question first without looking at the choices.
- Next, read all the choices and select the one that best matches your answer.
- Use the process of elimination to narrow down your choices.

- Look for important instructional words, such as not, before, and after.
- Use an index card to track your answers if there is a separate answer sheet.

Fill-in-the-Blank Questions

- Read the directions carefully.
- Read each question completely.
- Underline or highlight key information.
- Look for context clues.
- If a word bank is provided, use each answer choice once unless told otherwise.
- If a word bank is provided, circle or check the words you use rather than crossing them out.
- After you fill in the blank, reread the sentence with the word to see if it makes sense.
- Learn how to make your own word banks.
- Use mnemonic devices to help remember important details.

Essay Questions

- Read the question carefully and analyze the task.
- Organize your thoughts before you begin to write. Brainstorm ideas and make a graphic organizer, outline, or chart.

M
I
D
D
L
E

L
E
V
E
L

M
I
D
D
L
E

L
E
V
E
L

- Use the proper format.
- Develop a clear thesis statement.
- Provide supporting details and examples.
- Stay on topic.
- Use transition words.
- Proofread carefully.

Testing Accommodations

Students with learning difficulties often need testing accommodations. These students may process information slowly and need extra time to complete tests. Test-taking can be a very stressful experience; time restrictions increase anxiety. Allow students to take tests in alternate settings where they are free from distractions. Some students may need to have tests read to them due to a learning disability in reading or a focusing problem. Students with learning disabilities in writing need appropriate accommodations such as use of a word processor, spell-checker, grammar-checker, or a scribe. Students with disabilities often know the information, but they have difficulty completing tests if they do not have appropriate testing conditions.

Transitional programs for students ages 18-21 years should combine both job site training with a job coach and life skills classes as needed in order to facilitate development of skills to live as independently as possible upon aging out. Post high school transitional programs are beginning to be developed throughout the country in conjunction with colleges. These programs allow special needs students, ages 18 to 21, to be in an age-appropriate college setting while fostering their social, academic, and job skills.

Meetings should be held monthly with the vocational counselor and other support/transitional services personnel and/or agencies as students begin to age out of the public education system.

Keep the Training Going Strong

- Offer a training session one day each August for all aides working in the district. In addition, provide yearly staff development workshops (fall and spring) to enhance staff knowledge of special education, use of different strategies and techniques, or any new initiatives that have occurred in the district.
- Conduct comprehensive training annually for all special education teachers and support staff on how to proctor and administer district and state examinations.
- Encourage attendance at other district staff development workshops and/or workshops offered in the community to enhance professional development.

Look at Innovative Programming

One innovative program at Shaker High School that has been very successful in helping students to achieve state standards is the Inte-

grated Regents Program, a four-year program developed to facilitate attainment of a Regents diploma. Students take two years instead of one year to prepare for both the Math A and Living Environment Regents exams, which are required to obtain a Regents diploma. During the third and fourth years of this program, students choose an area for specialization (family and consumer science, technology, or business) and can earn college credits in mathematics, family and consumer science, and technology. In addition to having smaller classes (about 15 students per session), the program also uses teacher assistants. These assistants not only provide additional academic support for the students in this program, but also assist in facilitating communication to the special education staff.

Make Character Education a Priority

Learning cannot take place unless the school environment is one that values respect, personal ownership of the school community, and awareness of others. In conjunction with the academic remediation support students receive, they should also be provided with the necessary emotional support in order to facilitate their success. Having on staff a full-time psychologist, student assistance counselor, or social worker who actively connects with students on a daily basis enables students to deal immediately with concerns, so that they can go back to concentrating their efforts on their academics.

Implementation of a character education program in grades 9 and 10, using 11th and 12th grade students as cofacilitators with staff, has proved highly effective in heightening awareness of bullying and provides students with strategies to support those being targeted. Students often express their desire to improve the culture in their school. Character education not only discusses ways in which students can handle bullying, but also leads to a greater understanding of and respect for individual differences within our school community.

H
I
G
H

S
C
H
O
O
L

Collaboration, Collaboration, Collaboration

It takes a K-12 systemic team approach to ensure that students reach their goals. Districts should continually foster communication and collaboration among faculty at all levels. By doing this, teachers and administrators develop a better understanding of the skills and state standards being taught at various levels. Collaboration fosters a feeling of ownership and pride throughout the district.

Special education teachers can be an invaluable resource to assist both veteran and new teachers in understanding various disabilities and effective strategies they could use to integrate these students successfully into their classrooms. Members of a district's special education department need to be active participants in both school and district initiatives as well as at the community level. Both regular educators and special education educators should work collaboratively to develop in-service programs for district employees and to provide workshops for other school districts, local colleges, or community organizations.

Effective school districts embody the philosophy of systemic advocacy for grades K-12. Only by continually looking for ways to improve the quality of programming and supports on behalf of all students can a district achieve sustained success. Special education students who have been included in and educated as a part of the whole school environment can reach their goals and become contributing members of their community.

Behavior Management in the School

Children bring their lives into class. School can be a wonderfully therapeutic experience for them, giving them the opportunity for stability, nurturance, and consistency that they might not otherwise have in their lives. Teachers are an integral part of the learning and behavior management process and should not underestimate their potential impact each day on every student. The following pages provide some suggestions to help all students learn in a productive, supportive environment.

Changing, influencing, altering, or modifying the behaviors of students can occur in many ways. Two of the major forces influencing their behavior are parents and teachers. Working as partners, these powerful factors can make the difference between a student who is vibrant, healthy, and ready to learn and a student whose behavior disrupts the learning process for everyone.

Behavior management is an integral part of all human interaction in one form or another. Although misunderstood and maligned at times, sound behavioral change principles are the cornerstone of how human beings operate. A clear understanding of the basic principles of behavior modification increases the likelihood of desirable behaviors from students, both at school and at home.

Before beginning any behavioral program, these basic concepts should be kept in mind:

1. Behavior management is not a magic bullet!
2. Behavior management needs thoughtful preplanning and time to work.
3. Behavior management is not bribery, emotional extortion, or unusual treatment.
4. Behavior management requires specific ways of acknowledging and reinforcing positive behavior.

5. Behavior management works better when it is designed and tailored to the needs of each student.
6. Behavior management planning requires periodic or regular review, adjustment, or reformulation to remain vital and potent.
7. Not all reinforcers work with all students.
8. Most students will respond to a well designed behavior modification plan.
9. Behavior management is not a stand-alone program. It needs assistance and support through other good practice strategies.
10. Without sincere adult commitment to the principles and process, the chances of success are slim.
11. A successful behavior management plan will allow the student to apply the new learning to “jump start” behavior change and is not intended to be implemented forever.
12. Behavior management is easier than you think.

Prevention

In developing a set of classroom rules, routines, rewards, and consequences that you can live with, consider the following questions:

- How would you describe your own personal teaching style?
- What behaviors are acceptable to you in your classroom?
- What behavioral expectations do you have for your students?
- Are those expectations realistic? Could they be too high or too low?
- Have you taken into account the range of average behavior as well as traditionally difficult times during the school year (e.g., holidays, testing)?



Analyzing the Test

Purpose

To help students be successful on a state test, teachers need to know what is on the test. This activity asks teachers to study a test and become familiar with the questions, time constraints, organization, and so forth.

An effective follow-up activity is to have the teachers take the test. Sometimes a true understanding of the questions can be realized only by actually trying to answer them.

Preparation

- Make copies of a current sample test, released test items, or a recent old test (often available from the state education department and/or its Web site).
- Make copies of the **Analyzing the Test** worksheet.
- Obtain copies of the scoring guide from test administration materials.

Procedure

1. Form small groups of 6 to 8 teachers from the same discipline or grade level. If a test is inclusive of several grades, it is helpful if teachers from those grades are present. For example, if an English language arts test is given at grade 4, have teachers in grades 1 through 3 review the test together as well as grouping the grade 4 teachers.
2. Following the worksheet *Analyzing the Test*, have teachers work individually or in pairs to identify and describe the types of tasks, time constraints, scoring guide(s), number of questions, and standards/topics emphasized on the test.
3. Discuss findings in the group. Then have teachers outline the steps they would need to take to prepare their students for this test. Record the steps on flip chart paper and post them in the room.
4. Have individuals walk around to see the steps that each group identified.
5. Conclude by discussing the steps and identifying areas where teachers believe they need support or professional development to complete these steps.

Time

depends on length and complexity of test



Analyzing the Test

Test _____ Subject _____ Grade _____

	Multiple Choice	Short Answer	Extended Response	Essay
Number of Questions				
Total Points				

Time Constraints

Special Directions, Prompts, Allowable Reference Materials and Tools (e.g., calculator)

continued

Analyzing the Test *(continued)*

Scoring Guide(s), Type(s), Characteristics of Student Work Needed to Score Successfully

Other Things to Note

Steps to Prepare Students for This Test

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

What is recommended to avoid wasting professional development resources and provide the most relevant training while demanding better student performance?

The best way to provide the most relevant training while demanding better student performance is to determine:

1. What specific good practices are you expecting to see consistently implemented in each classroom? For example, are all teachers expected to individually assess students or understand their level of progress in meeting state standards? Are all English language arts teachers expected to use the readers and writers workshop model for lesson delivery? Are math manipulatives required as part of weekly instruction? Are rubrics used and understood by students and teachers to improve and refine daily learning?
2. What evidence is available on the extent to which research-based practices are being implemented in each classroom? Is there a protocol used by classroom teachers to assess their application of commonly agreed upon practices?
3. Which practices are most difficult to implement, and which practices are not being implemented? (These are two immediate areas that are relevant for comprehensive training.)
4. In which classrooms do student outcomes rise to an acceptable level of success, and what training can be provided to replicate classroom practices in other areas of the school or district?
5. Where do we have (or can we have) a model classroom so that other staff members can see what it looks like for students with disabilities to be successful in meeting standards. Use model classrooms as a training tool for other teachers.