

Strategies for High School Students with Disabilities in the General Education Curriculum



International Center
for Leadership in Education

Acknowledgments

The International Center for Leadership in Education wishes to thank the following authors of this resource kit:

Debra Bishop, Ed.D.
Lawrence C. Gloeckler
Rebecca Harrison
Nancy Johnson, Ed.D.
Patty Laney
Maria LeFort
Susan Szachowicz, Ed.D.
Dianne M. Tarmey



Excepting those portions intended for classroom or training use, no part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to International Center for Leadership in Education. The International Center for Leadership in Education grants the purchaser of this publication permission to reproduce those pages intended for use in classrooms or training. Notice of copyright must appear on all copies of copyrighted materials.

Copyright © 2007, 2009 by International Center for Leadership in Education

All rights reserved.

Published by International Center for Leadership in Education.

Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN 1-935300-08-3

REVISED EDITION

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



Overview

Introduction

School districts throughout the country are struggling with the challenges of *No Child Left Behind*. No issue has been more confounding to districts than increasing the performance of students receiving special education services, especially at the secondary level. National performance data for these students consistently shows a significant drop off when these students enter the middle grades, and that trend continues throughout the high school years. Yet, the Special Education Institute at the International Center for Leadership in Education has identified a growing number of high schools that have helped these students achieve success through a persistent, long-term, strategic approach to improving their instructional opportunities. At the same time, many more high schools have begun to address this issue as a priority.

Chapter Contents

Strategies for High Schools Students with Disabilities in the General Education Curriculum is designed to assist high schools and their districts in improving the performance of special education students by highlighting the strategies that successful high schools have used to bring about positive results. The three high schools described in Chapters 5-7 all have addressed this issue through a clear vision of what they want to accomplish and a persistent belief that students with disabilities can and will succeed. While the individual school strategies vary, they all are built from the foundation of high expectations for all students.

In addition to the specific high school strategies, this resource kit also has information on two primary strategies that highly effective schools are using to improve results for their students who are struggling. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the issue of co-teaching. Co-teaching is used in various ways in high schools that have improved the performance of students with disabilities in core academic subjects. When implemented correctly, this approach appears to show significant benefit over the self-contained classroom models of the past, but it needs to be put into operation thoughtfully and with adequate staff development. The co-teaching chapter

Strategies for High School Students with Disabilities in General Education Curriculum

gives both teachers and administrators a foundation for how to install and support co-teaching, using best practices from successful schools.

Another strategy is being considered and put into use by school districts throughout the country as a way to reduce the reliance on special education and improve the success of students who are struggling in school and are likely to be considered for referral. That strategy is the establishment of a general education intervention system. A common label for this approach is Response to Intervention, or RtI. Although RtI has gained momentum in the recent years, Chapters 2 and 3 do not focus solely on that model. Rather, those chapters describe the ingredients that are necessary for any intervention approach to become systemic and thus strengthen the general education system.

While much attention has been given to the relationship between intervention systems and the ability to identify students with learning disabilities effectively, the focus of the kit is on the effect that quality interventions have on the performance of students at risk and their ability to be maintained successfully in the general education environment. This will naturally lead to fewer referrals to special education, but the important attention needs to be on the success rate of the interventions. Chapter 3 highlights the steps necessary to install and implement a systemic intervention system that is likely to be sustainable and become an integral part of the general education system. Chapter 8 offers suggestions and materials for professional development related to Chapter 3.

A tool for schools to use to identify where they stand with respect to issues related to educating their students with disabilities is provided in Chapter 1. The Five Key Elements Checklist helps a school pinpoint structures and practices that need to be in place to support improved results for all of its struggling student subgroups, particularly students with disabilities. By using the checklist, a school can determine what it needs to strengthen in order to promote sustainable student success.

Two DVDs and a CD are included in the kit.

The Five Key Elements Checklist is included on the CD that accompanies the resource kit. A second checklist, this one for districts, is provided in the Appendix and on the CD. A district can use the System Strategies Checklist to assess its ability to sustain improvements gained by its schools. Improvements often occur through the efforts of individual leaders at the building level. When these leaders leave, the gains may disappear. Systemic issues need to be addressed at both the district and building levels to sustain improved performance over the long term.

Various other tools and forms are presented in the Appendix and on the CD as well. PowerPoint presentations provide professional development for district and school leadership. One is on system strategies and another offers guidelines for an effective intervention system.

The two DVDs included in the kit were recorded at the 2009 Model Schools Conference. *Meeting the Needs of Special Education Students* explains how many districts and schools across the country have improved the performance of their students with disabilities. *Strategies for Students with Disabilities in the General Education Classroom* explains how to put the material in Chapters 2 and 3 into action and describes one school's experience in educating these students to much higher standards.

Final Thought

Students receiving special education services are gaining increased attention in high school as the accountability for their academic performance increases. High schools that have established a track record of success have broken away from the traditional models used for these students and the low expectation that often accompanies their education programs. We hope that this kit will spark new ways of thinking about how to serve these students effectively, and how to implement strategies that have been identified as consistently in place in highly effective high schools and districts.

Larry Gloeckler, Executive Director
Special Education Institute
International Center for Leadership in Education

1 The Challenge of High Performance for Students with Disabilities

In effective schools, professional development is focused on what the data says is important, as well as on the needs of the faculty and students, and it stays persistent over time. Staff development is done not just in workshops, but also at the building level and with classroom follow-up. Teachers are not asked to go, absorb, and return to their classroom, hopefully retaining everything they have heard. Rather, they are supported in the classroom, through a variety of strategies, to internalize that new learning.

Using the Five Key Elements Checklist

The goal is not to experience gains for a year or two but rather to make improved performance a permanent part of the education program.

What does a school need to have in place to sustain the kind of improvements that are likely to result from the focus on struggling learners? The Five Key Elements Checklist, presented later in this chapter, has been used by educators to identify where their school stands on the issues of ownership, high expectations, interventions, inclusion/collaborative teaching, and organization/professional development. The checklist helps a school pinpoint the structures and practices that need to be put in place as it begins to look for change. The goal is not to make changes and experience gains for a year or two. Achieving improvements in performance must become a permanent part of the education program.

Ownership and High Expectations

The Five Key Elements Checklist raises important questions about faculty ownership and high expectations:

- Does your school have a strategy for high expectations? If not, are you going to take special steps to make sure that happens?
- Have you sat down as a faculty or used a leadership team to decide what you need to do if your expectations are not high enough for your students?
- Are high expectations for students with disabilities part of your interviews for new staff, so that all staff understand the culture of your school?
- Do your students know you have high expectations for them? For a true test of whether you have high expectations, ask your students.

Instruction Guided by Student Performance Data

Heartland Area Education Agency suggests that the most constructive manner of improving student performance is through the provision of an effective core curriculum, early determination of performance gaps for individual students, and provision of the necessary supports. In high performing schools, educators regularly use student performance data to determine which students are meeting expectations and which students need additional supports in order to do so. Teachers understand that the data does not provide a signal of student failure, but rather a signal to provide other and varied means of instruction .

Teachers and school-based intervention teams should use several types of student performance data at various points throughout the school year. Many districts conduct assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. Any instruments used must directly assess specific skills aligned to state and local expectations, report individual results, make comparisons across students, measure growth over time, and display data in a way that is useful to teachers. Teachers and school-based intervention teams can use such data to guide necessary instructional changes at the classroom level and/or implement other intervention strategies specific to a particular struggling learner's needs.

Educators should use different types of assessments in order to obtain the most useful data for choosing effective intervention and instructional strategies that will address specific student needs. Assessments that offer the necessary types of data fall into three categories: screening, diagnostic and progress-monitoring.

Screening Assessments

School districts should conduct a general screening three times per year in order to identify which students are meeting or not meeting expectations. The screening assessment should be aligned to state and local standards in

Grimes, Jeffrey and
Kurns, Sharon.
"An Intervention-based
System for Addressing
NCLB and IDEA
Expectations"

Blankstein, Alan.
*Failure Is Not an
Option*

Chapter 2 Action Plan for an Intervention System

reading, mathematics, and writing. The screening tool must include performance benchmarks that allow educators to identify students as proficient, progressing or below basic. Initial screening should take place early in the year to provide the necessary data to begin making classroom instructional decisions and to identify potentially struggling learners. Screening may not provide enough information to make decisions about specific interventions for struggling learners.

Diagnostic Assessments

Educators may need to conduct further diagnostic assessments when screening or classroom performance indicates that a student is not meeting expectations. An effective diagnostic assessment will help school-based intervention teams or individual teachers to identify specific skills that struggling learners need to address while offering further insight into the student's learning style and needs. A diagnostic tool helps a teacher identify a specific learning problem in order to make targeted instructional decisions to support the student.

Progress Monitoring Assessments

Educators should use progress monitoring of assessments to track the achievement of a student over time and to determine the effectiveness of an academic and/or behavioral intervention strategy. In order to accomplish both objectives, the behavior and/or skill must be described using a measurable baseline and a goal (i.e., the normal expectation). The baseline measurement provides the first data point and describes the level of performance prior to intervention. Subsequent assessments will provide additional data points, measuring any progress in relation to the baseline and the goal. Progress monitoring assessments may be more informal and frequent than others and should help educators determine the future course of instruction or the need for additional and/or different intervention strategies.

Essential Questions on the Components of an Effective Intervention System



1. What resources, additional research, and/or professional support will our district need in order compile and disseminate information on the key components of an effective intervention system?
2. What existing assets and practices in our district will help us to implement each of the five key components?
3. What resources and strategies do we need in order to overcome the challenges to implementing each of the five key components?

At this stage in the process, stakeholders must evaluate what they now know about the existing situation for their district's struggling learners alongside what they now know about effective intervention systems. If stakeholders have obtained all of the necessary information in both areas, they can use it to begin developing an action plan. This process will likely require stakeholders to build consensus on key issues that have emerged in the previous steps. The nature of those key issues and the details of the plan development process will vary among districts. However, any action plan for establishing an effective intervention system should include clearly stated goals and objectives, specific action items to achieve goals, assignment of responsibility for action items, and a timeline for fulfillment of action items, objectives, and goals.

In the Missouri case, stakeholders used small groups to build consensus around the main goals of their plan for establishing an effective intervention system. Those initial goals included:

1. Establish a system that includes the five key components of an effective intervention system.
2. Establish a school-based intervention team that has clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Step 5: Build Consensus and Develop an Action Plan

3. Provide the necessary professional development for teachers and school-based intervention team members to develop effective, research-based intervention strategies that will help struggling learners to be successful in the general education curriculum.
4. Establish a systematic data collection system that will provide teachers and administrators with timely and ongoing performance data for each student and that will help to determine the overall effectiveness of the system.
5. Establish a timeline for implementation and assign roles and responsibilities in plan implementation.



Essential Questions on Building Consensus and Action Planning

1. Do we have all of the information that we need in order to build consensus and develop a plan for establishing an effective intervention system?
2. How should we build consensus and solicit stakeholder ideas for action plan goals?
3. Do we need professional support to build consensus and develop an action plan?

Step 6: Ensure Adequate Professional Development to Support the System

As stakeholders implement their action plan, they must remain focused on the fact that quality professional development for all teachers and administrators will provide the foundation for success of the new intervention system. Stakeholders should purposefully design and deliver ongoing professional development opportunities that address not only theoretical issues around effective intervention, but also practical training in implementation of the intervention strategies that will ultimately have a positive impact on struggling learners. Educators will need these different types of professional development support throughout the process of implementing the new system – not just in the beginning.

Strategies for High School Students with Disabilities in General Education Curriculum

Outcome data is collected to determine the impact of the intervention system (i.e., requests for initial evaluations, classification rate, and increase in the percentage of students meeting expectations).

Data-Driven Decision Making — Questions for School Leaders

- What is our current basis for decision making?
- What does our district's data tell us about academic and/or behavioral performance?
- Is this data acceptable?
- Do the instruments that we use provide the kind of data we need to assess the needs of all learners, and especially struggling learners?

In the Carthage effective intervention system, instruction is conceptualized in a three-tiered model. That model is described below.

Tier 1 — Quality Academic Instruction in the Regular Classroom

The first line of support for all students is high quality core academic instruction in the regular classroom. Core academic instruction must include the following components: guaranteed to all students, standards-based instruction, consistently provided to students, assessments guide future instructional decisions, and based on research. Educators must be able to

Tiered Model of Research-Based Intervention

Chapter 3 System of Support for Struggling Learners

count on effective classroom instructional practices as they begin to review the needs of students who are not meeting expectations.

- An intervention system without quality classroom instruction will result in overall low performance for all groups.

Tier 2 – Strategic, Targeted, or Supplemental Instruction

For some students, instructional support must be provided to enable them to meet expectations. Tier 2 is characterized as strategic, targeted, or supplemental instruction. It includes instruction that is: in addition to core academic instruction, deeper and more prescribed than core academic instruction, based on screening results, specific and intentional in the way that data can be used to monitor the effectiveness of the support, designed through problem-solving approach (schoolwide or individual), and delivered to an individual or small group.

- An effective intervention system must include instructional support that supplements — but does not replace — classroom instruction.
- Intervention systems that do not provide supplemental support to classroom instruction lack the resources to support the diverse learning needs of students.

Tier 3 – Intensive Interventions

A few students will require intensive interventions that are in addition to core academic instruction to make continuous progress toward expectations. This intensive intervention is: designed based on progress monitoring results, designed through a problem-solving approach, and individualized.

- identifying students with disabilities to participate in co-teaching classrooms
- scheduling co-teaching classes

Friend, M., and Cook, L. "The New Mainstreaming: How It Really Works"

National Center for Educational Restructuring and Inclusion. *National Study on Inclusive Education*

Hourcade, J., and Bauwens, J. *Cooperative Teaching: Re-building and Sharing the Schoolhouse*

Selecting Co-Teaching Approaches

The research on co-teaching has identified a variety of approaches to the model, and often different labels have been used to describe a particular approach. Friend, Reising, and Cook described five co-teaching approaches generally used: lead and support, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching. In a 1995 survey by the National Center for Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, teachers indicated they primarily used four approaches when co-teaching: supportive teaching, parallel teaching, complementary teaching, and team teaching. Hourcade and Bauwens later referred to six approaches similar to those already mentioned: presenter-helper, part A-part B, two smaller groups, higher understanding, standard team teaching, and follow-up. Following is a list that clarifies which terms describe the same approach and provides a description of each approach.

- **Lead and Support/Presenter-Helper:** One teacher leads, planning lesson content and presentation with some input and feedback from the co-teacher. The other teacher plans for and assists with students' individual learning and/or behavioral needs.
- **Station Teaching/Part A-Part B:** Two diverse groups of students work at classroom stations with each teacher. Each teacher plans the content of her/his respective station based on the overall lesson plan. The two groups of students switch stations in the middle of the class period or the next day.

Strategies for High School Students with Disabilities in General Education Curriculum

- **Parallel Teaching/Two Smaller Groups:** Co-teachers jointly plan instruction and independently deliver content in the same way to separate groups of students. Each teacher may take half the class or small groups of students.
- **Complementary Teaching/Alternative Teaching/Higher Understanding:** One teacher instructs the large group while the other teacher pre-teaches, re-teaches, supplements, or enriches instruction for a smaller group of students.
- **Team Teaching:** Co-teachers share the planning and instruction for all of the students in a highly collaborative manner. Both teachers can lead large group and small group instruction.
- **Team/Follow-up Teaching:** Co-teachers jointly plan and present the basic lesson to all of the students and then split the class into two groups, each instructed by one of the teachers. The groups are divided based on different needs of students for review, re-teaching, or enrichment of the concepts taught.

Co-teachers need not confine themselves to one co-teaching approach. Depending on the needs of the students in the class or the goal of a given lesson plan, teachers may decide to use different approaches at different times. It is important for co-teachers to decide together which approach or approaches to use by considering both their own skills and comfort levels alongside the goals of the instructional activities.

Teachers new to co-teaching may feel more comfortable beginning with an approach such as lead and support, which may allow them to build trust in one another, develop skills, and adapt to the co-teaching program more gradually. When using the lead and support approach, however, it is important to ensure a consistent level of feedback and collaboration between the co-teachers during planning and instruction. Otherwise, the special education teacher risks functioning more like a teacher assistant, thus disrupting the fidelity of implementation of the co-teaching model.



Chapter 8

Professional Development for an Effective Intervention System

Introduction

The sole purpose of an effective intervention system is to create strategies so that students are successful in the general education curriculum. An intervention system is not a process to justify a referral to special education or other alternative placements. Rather, the system is used to make specific data-driven decisions to provide additional support so that students can meet academic and/or behavioral expectations.

An effective intervention system must include a process to identify students who are not meeting expectations or who are at risk of not meeting standards. This process is typically referred to as a universal screening, which is a critical characteristic of an effective intervention system. It allows a district or school to establish additional supports for individual and/or groups of students. This additional support is typically associated with the pyramid of interventions (Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3). The most effective intervention systems include the following characteristics:

- culture of high expectations
- universal screening process
- collaborative teams
- problem-solving approach
- implementation plan for the process
- evaluation process

An effective intervention system includes a highly trained team. This team has clearly defined roles and responsibilities related to the problem-solving process. It uses the problem-solving approach to identify the student's gap and design a plan of instruction, as well as to monitor the progress. This data is used to revise the intervention plan or make further instructional decisions for the student. A good intervention system also includes an evaluation system to determine the effectiveness of the process, quality of the intervention plans, and other identified outcomes (e.g., classification rate and number of students meeting goals).



Appendix

Overview

The Appendix contains resources that can be used to help implement the approaches presented in this resource kit. They are organized by the chapter that introduced them.

All of the items in the Appendix are also on the accompanying CD.

The International Center for Leadership in Education has experts in all areas related to these materials. These consultants can assist districts and schools in using the strategies and implementing effective systems. Please contact us at (518) 399-2776 or info@LeaderEd.com.

Strategies for High School Students with Disabilities in General Education Curriculum

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Class Activity: | Intervention Strategies/Accommodations: (specify target students) |
| Assessment/Summarizing Activity: | Intervention Strategies/Accommodations: (specify target students) |
| Homework/Class Extension: | Intervention Strategies/Accommodations: (specify target students) |

| |
|---|
| <p>Lesson Reflection:</p> <p>Students requiring lesson re-teaching or extension:</p> |
|---|

Source: Brockton High School