PROVIDING WHAT IS NEEDED:
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO FOSTER COLLABORATION BETWEEN
GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS FOR INCLUSION OF
STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

A Project

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by

Shanna Lynn Espinoza

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Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

of

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With changes in educational reform and a greater push toward inclusion, educators are increasingly required to provide support and educate students with disabilities in an inclusive general education setting. This requires that general education teachers have knowledge of special education laws and of inclusive practices, and collaborate with special education teachers to achieve an inclusive general education setting that supports student with and without disabilities. Research literature indicates that general education teachers view lack of knowledge of special education laws and practices, lack of knowledge and support of inclusive practices, and lack of how to collaborate effectively to be the most influential barriers to their use of successful inclusive practices. The research recommends that general education teachers receive professional development on special education laws and practices, common philosophies needed for inclusive education to be successful, and collaborative practices in order to
increase educators’ knowledge and abilities to support students in a general education setting. The purpose of this project was to create a professional development series for school staff members at one elementary school in the greater Sacramento area, which would increase their understanding of inclusive and collaborative practices. This professional development included providing knowledge on the use of inclusive practices, the use of collaboration practices, and the use of interventions and accommodations, as well as providing a broader understanding of special education laws and practice. The conclusions reached after presenting the professional development series are that the general education staff needs more professional development opportunities, and continued support and time to address the need for knowledge and skills in the areas of collaboration and inclusion. Furthermore, additional research is needed to add to the literature base to determine the long term effectiveness of using professional development to mediate lack of knowledge of special education laws, and inclusive and collaborative practices.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Jean Gonsier-Gerdin, Ph.D.

_______________________
Date
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my husband, Gregorio Espinoza, and son, Cruz Espinoza. My husband inspires me and believes in me in ways no one may ever comprehend or appreciate. I am a better person for having been blessed with having him as a partner in life. Despite the challenges and surprises we have faced together, he has always stood beside me and encourages me to be my best. Additionally, my son makes me want to become a better person—one who fulfills their dreams and shows the next generation that anything is possible.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great pleasure and appreciation that I present this project and thank all the people who have contributed to the successful completion of this project. First to my husband, who has supported, loved and encouraged me through my educational endeavors and life even when we had so many things going on in our life. Next, a special thanks to my professors, mentors, and colleagues, especially Dr. Gonsier-Gerdin, Juanita Patterson, and Judi Moreno, who have supported my vision for student success and opportunity. Finally, yet importantly, to all the children I have worked with and taught over the years and their families who have let me be a part of their lives. I have gained so much wisdom and understanding from working with my students and their families. Our combined experiences and time together have made a large impact on my life, for the better, and has led me along my journey in education. I will forever feel lucky and grateful to have been part of the lives of these amazing people.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

While there are many triumphs and challenges produced by the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), according to Turnbull, Turnbull, and Wehmeyer (2007), one of the major challenges is the significant role changes for general education and special education teachers. The role changes for general and special education teachers hinges on two critical educational reform practices: inclusion and collaboration (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wehmeyer, 2007), which are key elements in the reauthorization of IDEA. These two defining practices are components of a quality education for students with disabilities. Indeed, the method and overall effectiveness of collaboration and inclusive practices can have a significant effect on students’ outcomes. An increased emphasize on inclusion, which ensures that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum and instructional environment, highlights the notion that general education and special educational teachers should work collaboratively to address student needs. This collaboration includes discussing student’s needs in the classroom, problem solving, demonstrating instructional techniques, leading or participating in professional development, sharing resources, and networking with other professionals and outside agencies to best meet the student’s developmental needs and goals (Dettmer, Dyck, & Thurson, 2005). In short, the practices of inclusion and collaboration are not mutually exclusive practices; in fact, one is significantly interdependent on the other. In order for inclusion to be effective,
collaboration must also be an integral part of the scope of support for educators and students with disabilities.

Inclusion, broadly defined, involves the values and policies that society holds toward people with disabilities with the intention to allow for their unconstrained participation in education and society (Hutchinson, 2006). Manifested in public schools, inclusion promotes the membership of students with disabilities into the general education classroom to the maximum extent possible, as opposed to these students being educated in a separate, specialized classrooms taught exclusively by special education teachers. Inclusion in the general education classroom is part of the least restrictive environment (LRE) mandate requirement in IDEA, which specifically states that:

….to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1412)

As defined, the LRE would be the general education classroom environment (Mandlawitz, 2007). As a result, general education classroom teachers are being asked to meet the needs of and provide appropriate instruction and support to a much wider range of student abilities than has previously been the case, which can be both rewarding and challenging.
Despite the challenges creating an inclusive environment for all students with special education needs, approximately 61% percent of students with disabilities are being educated in general educational settings for 80% or more of the school day (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). This inclusion requires general education teachers to take a more active and accountable role in developing and implementing individualized education programs (IEPs). In particular, they need to help by assisting in the determination of appropriate accommodations and modifications that students need to access the general education curriculum (Turnbull, Huerta, & Stowe, 2006). The notion of inclusion spans past the classroom as educators are asked to view inclusion not “so much a delivery model as it is a frame of mind for a learning community” (Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou 2011, p. 45). Thus, collaboration between general education and special education teachers is needed more than ever to ensure that students with disabilities benefit from inclusive practices.

Ferguon, Ralph, and Katual (1996) have defined collaboration as the means by which “two or more people create an outcome for a student that no one of them could have created alone” (Ferguson, Ralph, & Katual, 1996, p.34). The heart of any collaboration then is working together to achieve more than if one worked separately. For educating student with disabilities within the IDEA regulations, collaboration is sharing expertise and experiences to ensure the most effective outcomes for a student with disabilities. Neither the general education teacher nor the special education teacher should be solely required or responsible for the education of students with disabilities, but together and with the collaboration of other parties, including parents and administrators,
these teachers should be continually collaborating to best meet the needs of the individual student with a disability.

However, often times collaboration rarely happens or does not occur at all. Conderman and Johnson-Rodriquez (2009) reported considerable challenges associated with collaboration between general education and special education teachers and emphasized the fact that teachers identified that “preservice coursework and field experience were insufficient preparation for collaborative activities in the real world of teaching” (p. 243). The fact that teachers are insufficiently prepared for collaborative practices may be the most critical barrier to effective collaboration. In addition, Voltz (2001) identified several other challenges to collaboration, including a perceived lack of knowledge about the needs of students with disabilities on the part of teachers, lack of specific requirements for interactions with special educators, issues related to the special education process, issues related specifically to the general education classroom, and, most notably, lacking time for collaboration. While there are many barriers to collaboration, the potential benefits to the education of a student with disabilities and student without disabilities makes it a worthwhile educational goal for any school.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem related to this project is twofold. First, the components of educational reforms included in IDEA, specifically inclusion and collaboration, are only as effective as their implementation and, therefore, can be subject to ineffective practices and lack of participation by general education and special education teachers. Second, many general education teachers lack the knowledge and skills to adequately teach
students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom in an effective manner (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). With little teacher preparation coursework and few professional development and collaboration opportunities, many teachers are unaware of what they are responsible for in relation to a students with disabilities and how they can best serve the students with disabilities (Leader-Janssen, Swain, Delkamiller, & Ritzman, 2012). The combination of supportive implementation of inclusive practices, professional development, and collaboration opportunities are necessary so general and special educators can share their expertise and knowledge, in order to effectively meet the needs of student with disabilities.

While the major educational reform practices of inclusion and collaboration are hallmark components of IDEA and educating students with disabilities, in many schools across the country, including the one described in this project, these practices are simply not happening in an effective manner to ensure the potential positive effects and growth. Without effective collaboration and the general education teachers’ willingness to facilitate an inclusive classroom, the effectiveness of these educational reform practices come into question. Hwang and Evans (2011) found that despite some negative attitudes toward inclusive education, most general education teachers have a favorably disposition toward the concept of inclusion, but they are concerned about its practical implementation, which is where collaboration and support is needed.

Despite the fact that many teachers support inclusion, many are also unlikely to make necessary accommodations for students with disabilities unless they have knowledge, skills, and confidence to do so (Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon, & Rothlein,
Without knowledge and skills development, few general education teachers may have the confidence to teach a student with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Furthermore, without professional development and collaboration opportunities, general education teachers will never acquire a greater knowledge and skill base or the expertise they need to educate students with disabilities. Therefore, knowledge and skills development in the areas of special education practices as they apply to students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom should be made available to general education teachers by way of professional development and collaboration opportunities with special educators at the local level. By providing these professional development and collaboration opportunities, the whole process by which students with disabilities are educated can be altered to support the efforts of general education teachers. Consequently, general education teachers may become more confident and competent in educating students with disabilities as part of the inclusive and collaborative educational practices outlined in IDEA.

**Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project is to design an introductory professional development series for special education staff members at one elementary school in the greater Sacramento area to present to their general education colleagues. The professional development series will include introductory knowledge on special education law and policy that focuses on inclusion and collaboration practices as well as introduce the conceptual framework of collaboration. This professional development series will be presented in the hopes of facilitating an ongoing dialogue about how to best serve the
student with disabilities in the inclusive classroom setting and what is further needed to support these practices. To do so, the author conducted discussions, wherein representatives from each grade level and the special education team provided input on the content of the professional development series. The findings of these discussions emphasized staff needs and concerns and with these in mind, relevant literature was reviewed in order to create the professional development series.

The hope is that this project will serve as a catalyst for future professional development at the school site, wherein more advanced and more in-depth special education related topics could be addressed. The current author’s intention in creating this professional development is to facilitate increased knowledge and skill development with the notion that this information will best serve students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms at this campus. The professional development series will provide a framework for the regulations that governs the approach to educating students with disabilities, the expectation for including a student with disabilities into the general education classroom, and the necessity of collaborative practices in ensuring success of these practices.

**Significance of the Project**

This professional development series is the first of its kind ever presented at this elementary school in the greater Sacramento area. This school is faced with many challenges in association with educating the student who have disabilities in their attendance area. From the discussion conducted by the current author with staff members, service providers, and administration, it is evident that there is an overwhelming lack of knowledge about special education laws, policies, and procedures. Many teachers are
unaware of what their responsibilities are, particularly as they relate to inclusion and collaborative practices with special educators. In addition, with little to no collaborative opportunities for general education and special education teachers to work together, the two groups often work in parallel to one another. This results in a potential negative attitude toward inclusion and a continued lack of knowledge about how to work with students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom. This school also has alarmingly higher rates of referral to special education services and higher special education caseloads than the surrounding schools in the district. Furthermore, special education teachers are not receiving the feedback that they need to facilitate collaboration in an effective manner and feel isolated from the general education process.

With these prevailing issues that relate to students with disabilities existing at this elementary school, this professional development series is targeted, timely, and provides the vital information every educator needs to know in order to adequately educate a students with disabilities in an inclusive class. The professional development series is also designed to be a discussion starter about the supports needed to facilitate success for our student population that have disabilities. Of the many chronicled issues facing general education and special education teachers at this school site, the project is meant to be part of an ongoing effort to providing the best instruction to the diverse student population with special needs that are educated at this school using inclusion and collaboration practices. Beyond the school site, this professional development series could be used at other school sites within the district and outside the district to foster the same goals as this series does.
**Limitations of the Project**

The limitations of this project lie in the fact that the professional development series will be designed and tailored to the needs of the general education staff at one specific elementary school in the greater Sacramento area. The fact that this professional development series was implemented at only one school site and the effect of this professional development series was only observed at one school site are potential limitations to this project. This professional development series is designed to meet the need of gaining introductory knowledge and skills in the area of special education laws, policies, and procedures as those elements specifically relate to inclusionary and collaborative practices, and, therefore, will not encompass all special education law or all components of IDEA. Finally, another limitation is that the project will not examine the impact of the professional development series at this school site over an extended period (i.e. not longer than half a school year).

**Definitions of Terms**

*Accommodations*

These are the practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting, and timing/scheduling that provide equitable access during instruction and assessments for students with disabilities (Thompson, Morse, Sharpe, & Hall, 2005).

*Collaboration and Collaborative Practices*

These involve the process of voluntarily working together toward goals and include the tasks of sharing responsibility, resources, participation, decision-making, and accountability for outcomes (Friend & Cook, 2009).
**General Education Teacher**

This is a person who holds a multiple subject or single subject certification or license to teach students core curriculum content in English language arts, mathematics, science, and/or social sciences.

**Inclusion and Inclusive Practices**

These are the practices of bringing services and supports to the students in the general education classroom, instead of removing students from learning experiences with same age peers in the general education classroom (Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010).

**Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

This is an individual tailored plan that provides at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education to a student with a qualifying disability (Turnbull, Huerta, & Stowe, 2006).

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

This is a federal law that sets forth several principles that states must follow in providing special education services to students with disabilities. The primary object of this law is to ensure that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education specifically designed to meet their unique needs in the least restrictive environment (Yell, 2012).
Interventions

These are high quality, research-based instruction in general education classrooms that match an increasingly intense, multi-tiered application of an array of instruction to individual needs (Office of Special Education Programs, Center on Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports, 2013).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

This principle of IDEA states that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are nondisabled. In addition, special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Yell, 2012).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

This law was enacted to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments (U. S. Department of Education, 2012)

Preservice

This term refers to the college or university coursework relevant to preliminary teacher preparation program (Stephenson, O'Neill, & Carter, 2012).
Professional Development

Professional development involves instruction or coaching that occurs in schools, districts, and outside organizations to enhance professional leadership potential and performance (Patti, Holzer, Stern, & Brackett, 2012).

Modifications

Modifications are changes in course, standard, test preparation, location, timing, scheduling, expectation, student response, or other attribute that provides access for a student with disability to participate, but alters or lowers the standards or expectation (Thompson, Morse, Sharpe, & Hall, 2005).

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Response to intervention is a process of implementing high quality, scientifically validated instructional practices based on learners needs, monitoring students’ progress, and adjusting instruction based on student’s response (Bender & Shores, 2007).

Special Education Teacher

This is a person who holds a special education certification or license to teach students with disabilities.

Student Study Team (SST)

The SST is a group formed within the school to further examine a student’s academic, behavioral and social-emotional progress. The SST team can propose interventions for the student. The team usually consists of a teacher, administrator, and support personnel from the school (Understanding the Student Study Team, 2009).
Organization of the Project

Chapter 1 introduces the project and outlines the importance of the project. Specifically, the introduction includes the background of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose of the project, limitations of the project, definition of terms, and an organizational overview of the project. Chapter 2 is a review of literature, which focuses on recent relevant articles, educational journals, books, and other literature that analyzes the fundamental changes to the roles of general and special educators and how these changes require a shift in perception and practice. Chapter 2 also examines the lack of knowledge and lack of skills for collaboration as challenges to inclusive practices, and how these challenges can be altered through professional development and ongoing support. In Chapter 3, the current author examines the process by which the project was created and presented. This chapter includes a detailed description as to how topics were collected through discussions with general education and special education staff members to personalize the professional development series to meet this particular elementary school staffs’ needs. It also presents how the professional development series was designed and structured based on this input. Chapter 4 concludes the project with a detailed description of the professional development series and the findings from the implementation of the project. In addition, recommendations for additional professional development sessions to further inclusion and collaborative efforts of all educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities and implications for future research are presented.
Chapter 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the responsibilities that general education teachers must assume in inclusive education environments as a result of educational reforms in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), 2004 and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), 2001. These changing responsibilities require both a shift in perception and practice such as increasing the need for participation in collaborative relationships that support inclusive practices in the general education classroom. This chapter also examines the lack of knowledge and lack of resources and skills for collaboration as challenges to inclusive practices for general educators, and how these challenges can be mediated through additional professional development and ongoing support. To this end, this review discusses the literature on how education professionals and leaders have used professional development opportunities to facilitate the building of collaborative relationships designed to support inclusive classrooms that, ultimately, support student with disabilities in their education.

Changing Responsibilities of General Educators

According to Griffin, Kilgore, Winn, and Otis-Wilborn (2008), the 1997 and 2004 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) supported inclusion practices by mandating placement opportunities for students with disabilities within the general education classroom or least restrictive environment (LRE) and emphasized the participation and progress in the general education curriculum. These inclusive practices are further supported by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of
2001, which requires the participation of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum by requiring their involvement in the assessment and accountability system. Thus, both laws support inclusive practices of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum and classroom.

Kilanowski-Press, Foote, and Rinaldo (2010) identified a defining characteristic of inclusion to be “bringing services and supports to the students in the general education classroom, as opposed to removing students from learning experiences with same age peers” (Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010, p. 43). Including students with disabilities in the general education classroom, which is the hallmark of inclusion, allows for many positive social and academic outcomes. Specifically, children in an inclusive setting gain engagement (Brown, Odom, Li, & Zercher, 1999) and social acceptance (Odom, Zercher, Li, Marquart & Sandall, 2006), which can lead to friendships (Buysse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002), as well as receiving access to grade level curriculum.

Despite the many forms inclusion can take in a variety of districts, the critical components of inclusion are belonging and participation in the general education class and the forming of positive and meaningful relationships with others (Odom et al., 2011). As a result, effective inclusion in schools supports everyone in feeling as if they belong and teaches children to accept differences and work together towards meaningful relationships.

The roles and responsibilities for general educators required by these above mentioned laws and best practices to result in the benefits of inclusive practices involve these educators collaborating and co-teaching with their special education colleagues for
the benefit of students with and without disabilities. These responsibilities can be challenging, especially when many educators still hold onto a “traditional views of special education” (Odom et al., 2011, p. 142), wherein special education teachers hold small group instruction using specialized instructional strategies instead of collaboratively supporting inclusion in the general education classroom (Griffin et al., 2008). Despite this traditional view of special education that some teachers may still have, the scope of teaching students with disabilities has clearly expanded to providing services within general education classrooms across the country as increasingly more student with disabilities are taught primarily in general education classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). As a result, general education teachers are coming to understand that while some of the teaching responsibility will be shared with special education teachers, much is still expected of them in this context of teaching (Kamens, Loprete, & Slostad, 2003).

The literature indicates that in order to gain the benefits of inclusive practices, educators must be willing to alter their goals, assessment, and instruction to accommodate and meet the range of developmental and educational needs present in today’s classrooms, including those of student with special needs. Essentially, general education teachers need to be prepared to accommodate all students based on their individual needs. A diversified approach, which supports inclusion, is significantly interdependent on collaborative practices that allow for shared knowledge to be utilized accommodating students’ needs in the classroom. This may be a fundamental change in
Challenges to Inclusion for General Educators

While there are positive social and academic outcomes of inclusion, there are marked challenges in implementing inclusive education in a school-wide model to lead to these outcomes. As school districts across the United States respond to the education legislation by embracing inclusive practices, many general education teachers are struggling with the challenges of inclusion (Smith, 2008). One of the most crucial challenges relates to the expectations of what is to occur within the curriculum of the general education classroom environment. Sailor and Roger (2005) identified that general education teachers normally have the job of moving students as uniformly as possible through the curriculum and some teachers may see students with disabilities as impeding progress at the expected rate. Additionally, Byrnes (2011) found that teachers cite “difficulties of adapting instruction, meeting student needs, and acquiring materials, training, and professional supports” (Byrnes, 2011, p. 270) as chief concerns in implementing inclusive education successfully. Thus, general education teachers who have tried to include students with disabilities without the materials and support may feel like they have failed, were under supported and undertrained, and may view children with disabilities as slowing the progression of the curriculum and as children best served somewhere else (Sailor & Roger, 2005). Teachers ultimately will be unable to support or effectively teach in an inclusive classroom if they do not have their professional needs and concerns met.
Despite the many challenges presented by teachers, the most often cited challenges to inclusion that was found in the literature pertained to the lack of knowledge and support on inclusive practices and the lack of collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995; Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, & Willig, 2002; Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009; Conderman, Morin, & Stephens, 2005; deBettencourt, 1999; DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Diehl, Ford, & Federico, 2005; Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993; Hwang & Evans, 2011; Lesar, Bener, Habel, & Coleman, 1997; Odom et. al., 2011; Scott, Vitale, & Masten, 1998; Welch, 1996). Thus, these two specific aspects that are challenges to inclusion will be discussed in more depth.

**Lack of Knowledge and Support**

Most teachers in general education classrooms have a multiple subjects teaching credential that includes limited to no coursework or professional development that is associated with the topics of special education practices and inclusion (Kamens, Loprete, & Slostad, 2003). As a result, many general education teachers have a lack of knowledge and training about special education legislation and practices, the needs of special education students, and ways to support a child with disabilities in the general education classrooms. This lack of knowledge has been an ongoing issue in education and is not a new phenomenon. In fact, Reynolds and Birch (1977), more than three decades ago, identified that general education teachers desire training prior to receiving students with disabilities in their classroom. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) on attitudes of general education teachers toward mainstreaming and
inclusion from 1958 to 1995, the researchers identified that teachers have voiced concerns for years over the inadequate training that they have received in addressing the needs of students with disabilities placed in their classroom. These findings support other research that clearly identifies a common theme that general education teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach students with disabilities in their classrooms due to a lack of knowledge about inclusion practices and how to instruct students with disabilities in the general education inclusive setting (Byrnes, 2011; deBettencourt, 1999; Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993; Hwang & Evans, 2011; Kamens, Loprete, & Slostad, 2003; Odom et al., 2011; Reynolds & Birch, 1977; Sailor & Roger, 2005; Welch, 1996)

Loucks-Horsley and Roody (1990) stated that, “Teachers may feel challenges, hopeful, and desirous of what can be accomplished, but they may also feel frustrated, burdened, fear, lack of support, and inadequacies about their ability to teach children with different kinds of problems” (p. 54). Ultimately, the lack of general education teachers’ preparedness to provide quality inclusive services to students with disabilities and their families is often viewed as one of the primary barriers to serving students in the least restrictive and most inclusive environments (Evans, Townsend, Duchnowski, & Hocutt, 1996; King-Sears, 1995; Pugach & Seidl, 1995; Sindelar, 1995).

deBettencourt (1999) found that teachers who had received more instruction in the area of special education were more willing to collaborate and were more willing to use instructional strategies that benefit students with disabilities in the general education classroom. On the contrary, those teachers who had received little to no instruction in the
area of special education were less willing to collaborate or use the instructional strategies that show benefit to students with disabilities. Therefore, deBettencourt (1999) concluded that teachers’ success with students with disabilities relied heavily on knowledge of special education laws and educational practices, and recommended professional development as a means to remedy the lack of knowledge.

While deBettencourt (1999) emphasized the need for professional development to counteract the lack of preparedness to teach student with disabilities in the classroom, the perception of general education teachers toward inclusion is something of interest as well. Most general education teachers view the concept of inclusion in a favorable light, even consider it a “natural extension” (Hwang & Evans, 2011, p.138) of education that supports a mutual social function to both students with and without disabilities, some general education teachers are still resistant to the practice of inclusion. Hwang and Evans (2011) found that general education teachers acknowledge the academic and social benefits of inclusion, but were somewhat divided with over half of all 33 general education teachers in their study reporting a low willingness to teach a student with disabilities in an inclusive environment due to lacking support and knowledge. These results indicate that although general education teachers view inclusion in a positive light, they lack the knowledge to effectively teach students in an inclusive environment. Being favorable toward inclusion, but being reluctant to try or feel successful at inclusion, were additional themes that resonate within the literature.

Bender, Vail, and Scott (1995) found that increased training in special education concepts resulted in more positive attitudes of general education teachers toward
inclusive practices and more willingness to use inclusive practices, which include collaboration, for the benefit of a student with disabilities in general education classrooms. Meanwhile, a negative attitude toward inclusion by general education teachers resulted in a decreased use of effective inclusive practices in these classrooms. Negative attitudes toward inclusive education, is in part, the reason for a teachers’ unwillingness to support students with disabilities (Hwang & Evans, 2011) in an inclusive setting. Scott, Vitale, and Masten (1998) found that when negative attitudes persist general education teachers are reluctant to modify their instruction for students with disabilities because they felt they had insufficient training and lack of supports from other school personnel.

In addition to the perceptions and lack of knowledge that the literature presented, the literature also stressed that general education teachers needed ongoing support to facilitate inclusive practices. Odom et al. (2011) identified that past research of inclusion practices included themes that collaboration, professional development, and specialized instruction conducted as part of inclusive practices were key elements used to achieve desired outcomes and meet Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals. However, the dilemmas that were evident in interviews of educators conducted by Odom et al. (2011) were that general education teachers felt under supported. Odom et al. (2011) found that the supports needed was “having key advocacy at the administrative level that commits resources for professional development, ongoing coaching and collaboration, and time for communication and planning” (p.348) and indicated that such supports were necessary to ensure that inclusion could be practiced with fidelity. Furthermore, for inclusion to be
successful, Hwang and Evans (2011) found that teachers need systematic supports and resources, such as teaching materials and curriculum, training, and smaller class sizes, as well as collaboration opportunities for inclusion to be successful in practice.

Thus, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that general education teachers need additional professional development and supports to be a successful part of inclusive practices. Professional development opportunities provide an opportunity for general education teachers to gain knowledge about special education laws and inclusive practices. This may provide general education teachers with a common philosophy about the nature of inclusion, outline an approach to teaching students with disabilities in the classroom, and may counteract some of the negative perceptions and attitudes toward inclusion that prevent successfully implementation of inclusive practices.

**Lack of Resource and Skills for Collaboration**

Friend and Cook (2009) define collaboration as a “style of interaction” that cannot exist in isolation and “can occur only when it is used by people who are engaged in a specific process, task, or activity” (p.8). The defining characteristics of collaboration are that the process is voluntary and requires parity among participants to meet shared goals that includes the tasks of sharing responsibility, resources, participation, decision making, and accountability for outcomes (Friend & Cook, 2009). This practice is essential to inclusion and is supported by IDEA legislation (Mandlawitz, 2007). As an increasing number of student with disabilities are being included in general education classrooms, the need for collaboration between general education teachers, special education teachers, and related service providers has deepened. General education teachers and special
education teachers along with families and other service providers are expected to collaborate to design and implement Individual Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities. In addition, IDEA presumes that students should be instructed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) setting, which strongly suggests that general education teachers, special education teachers, related service providers, families, administrators, and other team members collaborate on behalf of the student to work toward successful inclusive outcomes. In short, including students in the general education classroom effectively requires a multi-professional coordination of expertise.

McLaughlin (2002) described successful inclusion at exemplary schools as the implementation of specific teaching practices as well as a community of professionals working together to improve teaching and achievement for all students: “Within special education, collaboration between special and general educators is considered central to the successful inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms” (McLaughlin, 2002, p.280). Thus, it is evident that inclusive practices are dependent on staff members’ ability to collaborate effectively to meet students’ needs and provide an opportunity for achievement along with the student’s peers. Additionally, Gut, Oswald, Leal, Frederiksen, & Gustafson (2003) conducted a one year study on a collaborative project between general education teachers and special education teachers on behalf of 20 elementary students with special needs who were included in the general education classroom. Through weekly seminars, educators were provided opportunities to use their shared knowledge to create coherent instructional opportunities in all educational settings which were documented through student portfolios, dialogue journals, informal
discussions, and surveys. The findings suggest that inclusion requires general education teachers and special education teachers to collaboratively design and deliver instruction to benefit students with disabilities.

However, there are challenges and barriers to collaborative practices between general education teachers and special education teachers that affect inclusive practices. The very structure of schools is a barrier to collaboration. It has long been recognized that a substantial amount of work done by teachers is in isolation, thereby creating a barrier to collaboration (Barth, 2006; Milner & Hoy, 2003). Additionally, as general teachers have increasing responsibilities, they lack adequate time to work together and collaborate with special education staff (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000). Moreover, special education teachers are viewed as having the content knowledge and understanding of the rules and regulations of special education law and are, often times, viewed as leaders rather than resources (Cahill & Mitra, 2008). Cahill and Mitra (2008) found that special education teachers and related service providers may be viewed as having more knowledge and skills than general education teachers and as being experts in an area of specialization. These views can lead to general educators feeling intimidated and perhaps less likely to collaborate with their special education staff members.

Beyond these overreaching barriers and challenges to collaboration, another noteworthy challenge to collaboration is when educators do not share a common philosophy about educating students with disabilities. Carter, Prater, Jackson, and Marchant (2009) found that the shared common philosophy about educating children with disabilities was an important aspect in collaborating effectively. In a case study
group of 12 educators that took place in one of the largest suburban school districts in the United States, participants who jointly defined and assumed joint responsibilities for addressing challenges of educating students with disabilities were more successful than educators who did not share common philosophies (Carter et al., 2009).

When general education teachers report that they feel inadequately prepared to meet the demands of inclusive education as mentioned above or have dissimilar philosophies about inclusive education, collaboration has been acknowledged as the one of the most useful and accessible resource available to the general educator (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006). DeSimone and Parmar (2006) found in an in-depth study of seven general education teachers that they identified with being ill prepared to meet the learning needs of students with learning disabilities in their classrooms. However, the same teachers overwhelmingly saw collaboration with support staff, whereby they could gain some of the knowledge they were lacking, to be the key in altering their teaching practices in a manner that was beneficial to students with learning disabilities (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006).

Additionally, many educators find that it is difficult to collaboratively plan effective instruction, accommodations, and adaption if the participants lack skills to collaborate and problem solving (Carter et al., 2009). This lack of collaboration and problems solving skills may be related to a lack of knowledge and practice in collaboration. To emphasize this point, Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, and Willig (2002) discovered that only 53% of special education teachers and 29% of general education teachers recall having coursework in collaboration in relating to inclusive
practices. These results support the finding of Conderman, Morin & Stephens (2005) regarding the limited coursework time given to collaborative practices in preservice teaching programs.

The building and fostering of collaborative relationships between general education teachers and special education teachers can provide general education teachers with an understanding of strengths and limitations of students with disabilities, as well as provide a clear expectation of these students’ performance in the classroom (Kluth & Darmody-Latham, 2003; Diehl, Ford, & Federico, 2005). Carter et al. (2009) specifically recommend that preservice teacher preparation and inservice professional development focus on addressing this lack of knowledge and divergent philosophies that hinder the benefits of collaboration and inclusive environments.

Since collaboration and inclusive practices are part of educational law and largely viewed as beneficial to all students (Mandlawitz, 2007), general education teachers, special education teachers, administrator, parents, and other service personnel must overcome the barriers and challenges to collaboration and inclusive practices to achieve the best outcomes for student with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Therefore, to overcome some of the challenges and barriers to collaboration teachers should advocate for administrative support of common planning periods and establishing regular meeting times (Kamens et al., 2003; Klinger & Vaughn, 2002; Trent, Driver, Wood, Parrott, Martin, & Smith, 2003). Additionally, general education teachers should seek and utilize collaborative times to gain and share their expertise with special educators toward the common goal of inclusion. Finally, the lack of knowledge of general education teachers
extends beyond merely having different philosophies about or not knowing ways to educate student with disabilities in the general education setting and includes the lack of knowledge of how to collaborate. A number of authors all recommended that general education teachers who have a lack of knowledge or skills on how to collaborate in an effective manner or have competing philosophies that do not support inclusive practices would benefit from professional development in the area of collaboration and the best approaches to educating student with disabilities in the general education classroom to support inclusive practices (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, & Willig, 2002; Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009; Conderman, Morin, & Stephens, 2005; DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Diehl, Ford, & Federico, 2005; Kluth & Darmody-Latham, 2003).

**Research on Professional Development to Overcome Challenges to Inclusive Education**

With overwhelming evidence presented in the literature that identifies lack of knowledge and skills of general education teachers to be barriers to the occurrence of collaborative and inclusive practices, it is highly recommended that professional development occur to attempt to remedy this lack of knowledge and skills. By providing knowledge to general education teachers and staff members, the potential benefit is that this knowledge can best serve both students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Since general education teachers may not have been taught the knowledge and skills about collaboration and meeting the needs of diverse abilities during their teaching preparation programs, professional development opportunities may need to
occur while they are in a setting where teaching diverse learners is part of their instructional duty.

Clearly, there is a need to provide training that could alter perception and attitudes toward inclusive practices and provide knowledge and skill on how to effectively collaborate to support inclusive practices. With adequate training through professional development sessions at the school level, it is possible to support inclusive and collaborative practice in a fashion that would be beneficial to both educators and students. Lesar, Bener, Habel, and Coleman (1997) studied the development, implementation, and evaluation of an innovative preservice teacher-education program in elementary education that found that supporting inclusive practices with training was beneficial. General education teachers, who were given knowledge in the areas of inclusion and prompting researched-based practices of instruction, views of educating student with disabilities in the general education classroom, and the role of collaboration, were able to provide an environment where all students in the inclusive classroom benefited (Lesar et al., 1997).

Moreover, since collaboration in an interdependent concept to inclusion, lack of knowledge and skill on how to collaborate effects inclusive practices. While no one study demonstrated the direct impact of inservice professional development as a means of facilitating inclusion or collaboration, collaboration is viewed by many educators as a strategy to gain support and knowledge from their special education teacher colleagues and support student with disabilities in their class (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006). Thus, a number of authors have recommended using professional developments as a means of
developing collaborative skills that would support inclusive practices (Cahill & Mitra, 2008; Carter et al., 2009; DeSimone & Parmar, 2006).

In short, continued professional development is essential and should occur. Not only would it allow educators to feel more supported through collaborative practices and further their knowledge and skills development, but would also support the inclusive environment that can benefit students. Based on the research presented in this literature review and the need at the current author’s school site, the current author is determined to provide a professional development series that will support general education teachers in gaining knowledge about inclusive practices and be a catalyst for ongoing collaboration. The current author acknowledges that this professional development series will only be a genesis for future and ongoing professional development and collaborative practices. General education teachers need ongoing supports, additional professional development, and continued collaborative opportunities to begin to and continue to support inclusive practices that are defined in the literature as a benefit to all students.
Chapter 3

METHODS

In this chapter, special emphasis is given to examining the process by which the project was created. This chapter includes a detailed description as to how topics for the professional development series were determined in order to meet this particular elementary school staff’s needs and how the professional development was created and structured based on collaborative input from key stakeholders, such as general education teachers, support staff, and administrators.

Gathering Input from Key Stakeholders for Topics

The first step in implementing the project was to get a strong feel for the needs of the staff at this elementary school. This was completed by initiating informal discussions between the current author and staff members, which allowed staff members to openly share their thoughts and concerns as they relate to supporting student with special needs. The current author conducted these discussions with general education staff members on a grade level basis in the elementary grades of kindergarten through fifth grade and department-based discussions in the middle school grades of sixth through eighth grade. These informal discussions occurred at various time, including before school, during lunches, and after school. The current author began each session by discussing the need for fostering collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers in the hopes that collaboration would promote a more inclusive environment for student with special needs in the general education setting. Then the current author asked open-ended questions to entice a discussion as to what is needed for these collaborative
practices to occur. She used the direct prompt of “What do you think is needed to have better collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers?” to ignite a discussion. Most general education teachers responded that they needed more information and collaboration time and, thus, the current author then would ask, “What information do you need or what key concerns do you have for serving students with disabilities in your classrooms?”

In the elementary grade levels, the key themes of concern brought forth through these discussions were needing to know how to get supports and provide interventions to students through the Response to Intervention (RTI) process and the Student Study Team (SST) process and how to initiate initial assessment of eligibility for special education services. These teachers also showed a desire to learn how some students qualify for services and others do not. In addition, they identified wanting to know the best way to support students who have special needs in the classroom and how teachers can support students with behavioral issues. Similarly, at the middle school level, the key themes were how to support student with special needs in the classroom and how to support students with behavioral issues, particularly learners who are defiant and/or unmotivated. Moreover, middle school teachers also identified the need for a better understanding of how to use Encore classes as a RTI level II interventions time that support students’ academic development and achievement.

The next step in developing the project was to take these concerns to the school’s administration (i.e. principal and vice principal) and support staff members (i.e. special education staff, school psychologist, speech and language pathologist, English language
development specialist, and intervention teacher) to determine if they had similar or different concerns. The current author found that the administration and support staff members have different areas of concerns than the general education staff members at both the elementary and middle school levels. The levels of high referral for initial assessment to determine eligibility for special education services, low rates of using interventions by general education teachers, and the lack of collaboration and inclusive practices in the general education educational settings were all concerns of support providers. Furthermore, of great concern to the support providers, was that many general education teachers come to view students who receive special education services as “special education students” and, therefore, view these students as no longer their responsibility. Additionally, support providers also indicated that general education teachers’ lack of attendance at IEPs was an enormous concern as it left some parents questioning the collaboration and inclusive practices at the school site.

The administration staff had specific concerns related to a pattern of using special education service as the only intervention available at the school. They wanted to empower general education teachers to use the Response to Intervention (RTI) model in connection with the Student Study Team (SST) process to support students as part of an early and ongoing intervention model. The administration shared the belief that general education teachers need to be held accountable for the delivery of interventions in a hope that this would limit the need for initial special education assessment. Another concern was the lack of responsiveness of the general education teachers to their responsibilities in addressing the needs of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), specifically
the need for general education to collaborate with special education teachers or resource specialist to implement IEPs and to attend the IEP meetings on a consistent basis. The administration was very clear that they wanted to have general education teachers attend more IEP meetings because they found the frequent use of the excusal form to be an embarrassment to the school and district.

The support staff and administration had similar concerns about general education teachers having a limited understanding or knowledge of the special education process as it applies to initial assessment and eligibility, and providing adequate support to students with an IEP in the general education setting. They also were concerned that special education services are used as the most frequent form of intervention at this site. This concern is supported by the fact that this school site has the highest rate of special education initial assessment referral in the district and, thus, a higher rate of students who are receiving special education services than other schools in the district.

**Creation of Professional Development Series**

Using this information, the current author designed an outline for professional development that would address some of the themes of concerns presented by general education teachers at the elementary and middle school levels, administration, and support staff. It was evident that not all topics of concern could be addressed, but this professional development series was designed to be a catalyst for future professional development that would focus on providing necessary information to staff members to facilitate the concept of inclusive and collaborative practices in this educational setting.

An outline of topics that could feasibly be presented was designed through a process of a
collaborative discussion with the school’s administration based on the responses of the informal discussion. This outline also was shared with the current author’s project sponsor, who immediately identified that although the information was necessary for staff members given the concerns and needs presented, it was too much information to be presented in the single one-hour session, which had been afforded the current author by the administration. During the discussion with the current author’s project sponsor, two major topics of the professional development were identified. The first topic focused on the Student Study Team (SST) process and the referral of students for the initial assessment to determine if the student was eligible for special education services. This topic area addressed the themes of concern from all collaborating members, including general education teachers, administration, and support staff. On the other hand, the second topic focused more on the responsibilities and laws that relate to a student who already has an Individual Education Program (IEP), which also addressed the concerns of administration and support staff. Through a collaborative process between the current author and her project sponsor, it was determined that the best method of moving forward was to divide the professional development into two sessions that would be delivered on two separate dates.

With this new knowledge, the current author approached administration with this concept and shared the outline for each proposed session of the professional development. After discussing the intent and design, the administration allowed this professional development to be divided into two mandatory sessions. In session one, all staff members would be provided information on the RTI and SST process and the initial
assessment process to determine if a student is eligible for special education services. In session two, the current author would focus on how students are determined to be eligible, what general education teachers are responsible for in regards to a student with an IEP and how they can comply with special education law, which includes attending the IEP on a consistent basis and supporting a student with special needs in the classroom. The second session would also focus on encouraging the process of collaboration between general education and special education staff and the inclusion of any student with special needs in the general educations class as these are necessary elements in adhering to educational laws.

The two professional development sessions were implemented over two one hour meetings that were allocated to the current author. The first session was implemented on October 3, 2012 during a mandatory staff meeting. The second professional development was implemented on October 31, 2012 at a mandatory site collaboration day. After each professional development, questions and feedback were solicited from the audience.

**The First Professional Development Session**

The current author divided the original professional development outline into two outlines and began focusing on further development of the first professional development session. This first session was discussed with the administration as it focused on the RTI process and SST process that may eventually lead into a referral to determine if a student is eligible for special education services. The administration has a new documentation system that they wanted to implement to ensure that general education teachers were
providing RTI interventions and documenting the data that would be used through the SST process.

The documents presented to the current author for use during the first professional development were created by the administration. These documents included a comprehensive intervention plan, a step-by-step intervention and SST process plan, a comprehensive teacher narrative form, a RTI level II instructional intervention documentation form, a RTI level II intervention form for teaming and regrouping, and a RTI level III instructional intervention documentation form. These forms and the processes of RTI intervention and the SST were discussed at length as a new way to document and hold general education teachers accountable. This discussion and these forms would provide the basis for much of the first professional development. In addition, some background material on the RTI process was included to provide the foundational knowledge to apply to these forms and new process.

Through the first power point presentation, these processes and forms were outlined completely and explained throughout the presentation. In addition, the pertinent educational laws, the RTI process, and specific information related to the school site were reviewed. The title of the power point presentation was “SST Process and Initial Referrals to Special Education.” This professional development contained 40 slides and was reviewed with administration and support providers, specifically the SST coordinator, who approved of the presentation format and contents. In addition, the current author’s project sponsor also reviewed the presentation for content and agreed
that the content was appropriate. A detailed description of the content of the first professional development presentation will be discussed in the following chapter.

**The Second Professional Development Session**

The second presentation was designed through a similar process. First, the current author designed an outline after discussing with the support staff the themes of concern from the support staff and administration, and taking into account the questions that general education teachers had asked. This outline was reviewed with the administration and current author’s project sponsor to gain approval of its contents. Then, the author used materials from a special education law textbook, past special education credential course materials, and the literature review for this project to create a comprehensive and easily understandable professional development.

This professional development session focused heavily on what educators need to know about special education and highlighted much of the IEP process, as well as, introduced the need for collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers to facilitate both inclusive practices and proper implementation of a student’s IEP. It reviewed qualifying disabilities, components of an IEP, presented an IEP in a glance form, and specifically outlined what general education teachers and special education teachers are responsible for in terms of implementing the IEP. It contained 39 slides and was titled, “What Every Educator Needs to Know About Special Education.” The final professional development presentation was shared by the current author with her project sponsor, administration, and support staff who approved of its contents. A
detailed description of the content of the second professional development presentation
will be discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 4

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, a detailed description of the completed project is shared. The findings from the implementation of the project are discussed to determine the potential needs for this school site. The recommendation for additional professional development is based on the need to further educate staff members and support the endeavors of the overall project. Finally, implications for future research are presented.

Description and Implementation of the Professional Development Series

The First Professional Development Session

The first professional development presentation was broken down into subsections that were presented by the current author, administration (principal), and the school site’s SST coordinator. This decision to have a joint presentation format was made from a collaborative approach. The rationale for this approach was that the message may not be received well or seeing as having authority if it was presented by the current author alone. Furthermore, without the backing from administration and the SST coordinator, the adherence to the new process and the professional development would be less effective. Transitions from one speaker to the next occurred smoothly, while staff was attentive to the information delivered. There was some questions that arose from the staff regarding the level of documentation expected through this new SST process and the new documentation forms presented, but administration reminded the staff that this documentation seems like a lot, because in the past there has been no formal requirements on documentation.
The presentation, which can be found in appendix A along with all the forms referenced, began with the purpose of the professional development (slide two). Following this were three slides (slides three-five) that gave background information about this school site, including a look at our caseload, a who’s who of support providers at this school, and a little background information about the main presenter (i.e. the current author). Next, a slide (slide six) highlighted the key components of educational laws that effect how schools operate and, specifically, how schools should operate in relation to students with special needs.

The seventh slide highlighted how students get help in schools, through processes that either are exclusively a general education function or are designed to be used in a collaborative and inclusive fashion with special education teachers in the general education setting. Slide eight was added to illustrate the RTI process as it applies to both academics and behavior. This graphic highlighted the main aspects of RTI pyramid presented on the Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (PBIS) website (Office of Special Education Programs, Center on Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports, 2013). This was the best graphic that could provide a visual depiction of the necessary process and aspects of the RTI process for both academic and behavioral development.

Next, the current author started reviewing the forms for the new SST process that the administration is attempting to implement at this school site. Slide nine highlighted the Intervention Plan form and this process as part of our educational law. Slide ten began the process of describing two hypothetical students (student A and student B) that are chronicled along this RTI process to help illustrate the process for staff members. Slide
11 explained RTI level II interventions and how they should be implemented. This was followed by a graphic of the Level II Intervention form for Teaming and Grouping on slide 12. Slides 13 through 15 explained the sections of the Level II Instructional Intervention Documentation form and showed a graphic of this two-page document.

On slide 16, the current author returned to hypothetical student A and student B and explained that if student A is making improvement then general education teachers should continue this intervention, but if the intervention is ineffective as it has been for student B, then the process continues. Slide 17 highlighted where on the Level II Instructional Intervention Documentation form one would document the second round of interventions and slide 18 explained how at this point a general education teacher could initiate the SST process by contacting the school’s SST coordinator. Slide 19 provided a sample graphic of the Intervention and SST Process document that outlines systematically how the SST process would be completed from this point forward.

Slides 20 through 29 outlined in great detail the step by step process that can be found on the Intervention and SST Process form and is explained though these slides. This process begins with step one, which utilizes the Teacher Narrative, and is shared on slide 20. On slide 21, the steps two through four, which leads to the first SST meeting, are presented. Slide 22 outlined the potential direction that could be taken at the first SST meeting and how the process may move into Level III RTI interventions (step five).

The first six weeks of Level III RTI interventions are explained on slide 23 followed by a graphic of the Level III Instructional Intervention Documentation form on slides 24 and 25. Next, the Intervention and SST Process form is highlighted on slide 26,
which demonstrates how staff would meet for a follow up SST meeting to discuss the student’s growth (step six). If no growth has occurred, then the process moves to a second session of level III RTI intervention instruction. At this point, the team is at step seven of the Intervention and SST Process and may be moving to the referral for initial special education assessment to determine if the student is eligible to receive special education services. This step in the process is outlined on slides 27 and 28. The end of the SST process and the referral for Special education assessment, which is the final step and step eight in the Intervention and SST Process, is explained on slide 29.

The following slides provided an extensive description of the new SST process and the new forms that must be filled out. Slides 30 through 31 gave some tips on things to remember while going through the SST process. Next, slides 32 and 33 discussed some unusual circumstances and misconceptions of the students in question that would otherwise be referred to the SST process.

Finally, slide 34 though 35 discussed pertinent information about the initial referral process, specifically the number of days allocated to the school for responding to referrals and completing the assessments as required by IDEA. Slide 36 listed all the disabilities that qualify a student for special education services under IDEA and slide 37 and 38 described the method of determining eligibility for special education services and important aspects to keep in mind as a student may or may not qualify to receive special education services.

In concluding this first power point presentation and professional development, slide 39 asked the staff to write down their questions and fill out the Questions and
Additional Information Needed form that the current author provided to catalog and answer any questions following this professional development. After the professional development, the current author received seven completed SST Process and Initial IEP Professional Development Question and Additional Information Needed forms from the 45 teachers that attended that professional development. One of these included a comment that this professional development was needed and that that staff member was “loving” the new process. The remaining six forms indicated questions only. Topics ranged from questions regarding special considerations for English language learners in this process, questions about speech screenings as it relates to the RTI and SST process, and questions about the baseline data needed for the Level II RTI instruction and what materials could be used in the middle school grades for Level II RTI instruction. Two questions were about students who have severe or violent behavior and what the process would be for those students. After meeting with relevant service providers and administration, the questions were answered through a collaborate meeting of relevant administration and support providers and a Questions Answered document was sent to staff member via email for their review. This document can also be found in appendix A.

Second Professional Development Session

The current author delivered the second professional development presentation independently. These power point slides can be reviewed in appendix B. Most of the 46 staff members appeared attentive to the presentation and seemed interested in the material. The professional development was completed in the allocated time and the information was thoroughly explained.
For the second professional development session, the focus was on the initial referral process and any subsequent eligibility for a student to receive special education services. The focus also was designed to give educators some knowledge on what their responsibilities were concerning student with IEPs. The title of the second professional development was “What Every Educator Needs to Know About Special Education.” This professional development was reviewed with administrators, support providers and the Director of Special Services for the school district, and the current author’s university project sponsor.

After the title slide, on slide two the current author highlighted a quote shared by her university project sponsor. This quote by Haim G. Ginott describes the importance and power of the educator in relation to students. This quote seemed like an appropriate way to transition back into the subject of general educator’s responsibilities by highlighting the vast amount of influence they have over a students’ education and affect.

Next, slide three reminded staff members where we left off in the RTI and SST process, specifically the time when an initial referral for special education evaluation would occur. Slide four highlighted the actions that educators should take during the initial referral process, while slide five outlined what the educator should be prepared for at the initial IEP meeting. This was followed by slide six and seven, which described what would happen if a student does or does not qualify for special education services. Slide eight reviewed, yet again, the qualifying disabilities for eligibility to receive special education services per IDEA and was followed by three slides (slides nine though
eleven), which noted specific details pertaining to the eligibility criteria, and the law that governs them.

Slide 12 shared the various aspects of the responsibilities of educators and pertinent knowledge that educators need to know when a student does qualify for special education services. Slides 13 through 16 outlined key components of an IEP, specifically the key components that are most critical for general educators to know, such as their responsibilities when working with a student who has an IEP. These key components were again highlighted on slide 16, which illustrated a sample IEP in a Glance form produced by Special Education Information System (SEIS) that summarizes the critical information general educators need to know about a student’s IEP.

Next, slides 17 through 19 described how services, accommodations, and IEP goals are determined and what types of services could be provided to meet a student’s needs. These elements are important for general education teachers to know in order to help facilitate the implementation of an IEP. Slide 20 outlined what general educators and staff members are responsible for in the implementation of a student’s IEP, while slide 21 covers how general educators should proceed with implementing district benchmark assessments and in reporting a student’s grades.

The next slide (slide 22) illustrated the concept that general education teachers and special education teachers are like co-parents or co-educators. The point of the slide was to highlight the fact that once a student becomes eligible for special education services, it does not mean that s/he is the primary responsibility of the special education teacher. This slide was designed to explain that inclusion and collaboration between
general and special education teacher is necessary to foster the development and success of the student who receives special education services.

Utilizing the research found in the literature review for the project, slides 23 through 25 highlighted the concept of a Least Restrict Environment (LRE) and how this practice can foster the values of inclusion and inclusive practices. Actual examples of when to collaborate with a student’s case manager was described on slide 26. In addition, some tips on how a general education teacher can ensure an inclusive setting were explained on slide 27.

Slide 28 and 29 listed the responsibilities of the special educators, while slides 30 and 31 explained in detail the different types of IEP related meetings that special education teachers prepare for and hold, including annual, triennial and transition (30 day) IEPs, addendum meetings, and manifestation determination meetings. Next, two slides (slides 32 and slides 33) reviewed some of the responsibilities of general education teachers during IEPs. Special attention was given to having general education teachers attend the IEP meeting and explaining that this is part of the California Educational code, as well as IDEA.

In conclusion, slides 34 through 36 reviewed again the exact number of students with IEPs at this school site and provided some information as to how we deliver specialized instruction time and schedule IEPs. The final slide (slide 37) asked staff members to fill out their check out slip, wherein they could leave questions for the current author to answer and circle topic areas on which they still would like more information.
Again, the staff members shared their questions and the areas they would like to find out more information on by completing the What Every Educator Should Know About Special Education question and information needed form. Of the eleven forms completed and returned, six had questions regarding what is a Specific Learning Disability (SLD), what is Conduct or Opposition Defiance Disorder, or questions about how to find previous SST form and 504 plans, and when could the current author meet with general education teachers to discuss a student who has an IEP. Again, these questions were answered through a collaborative process of meeting with administration and support providers and were responded to through an email document that listed the question and corresponding answer. This document can be found in appendix B. In addition to these questions, the other five completed forms indicated that the staff members would like to get more information about interventions, RTI, inclusion, accommodations and modifications, counseling services, behavior and behaviors support plans.

**Discussion and Outcomes of Professional Development Series**

Before conducting the professional development presentations, it was expressed by the general education staff, support providers, and administration at the school site that staff needed to learn how to give support and interventions to students receiving special education services in the general education classroom. The emerging themes of concern included that educators were unsure about the RTI and SST process, felt they lacked intervention materials and methods, were concerned about student’s behavior in the classroom and seemed to have little knowledge as to how they could be inclusive of
students with special needs. Furthermore, staff indicated that they wanted to know more about how students qualify for special education services and how initial assessment to determine if a student is eligible to receive services could be initiated. In addition, support staff and administration had concerns about general education staff members not using collaborative and inclusive practices, labeling students, not seeing students with special needs as their responsibility, not addressing the student’s individual needs in the classroom, and/or not attending the IEP meeting at a high or consistent rate.

The professional development presentations sought to answer the questions of how interventions should be used as part of the RTI process and how the SST process should be used to document interventions before an initial referral to special education assessment could be made. The professional development also sought to clarify how a student could qualify for special education services and what responsibilities that general education staff have in regards to a student with an IEP or special needs. Following these professional development sessions, the staff indicated that they still have questions and lack knowledge in a variety of areas including RTI, interventions, inclusion, and how to use accommodations and modifications in the general education classroom. General education teachers and staff members specifically asked for more information or professional development in the areas of level II and level III RTI interventions, inclusion, the use of accommodations and modifications, counseling services, behavioral issues, and how behaviors support plans could be used effectively. These areas will be addressed through continued professional development presentations, collaborative meetings, and individual meetings.
Through this professional development delivery process, general education teachers appeared to gain a greater understanding of the general education and special education laws and practices as subsequently there was an increase in the use of the SST process and fewer referrals for initial special education evaluation requests. In addition, general education teachers began to see where their responsibilities are in the RTI, SST, and IEP processes and seemed to have development a more positive view of future collaborative efforts, which was evident by their use of the RTI and SST processes and their willingness to seek collaborative assistance for students who are struggling in class. However, it is also clear that general education teachers and staff members still need more professional development opportunities to obtain more information and reinforce information that they have just acquired. This need for continued professional development was evident by some teachers not documenting their interventions or failing to collaborate and seek help from site staff members to help a student who was struggling in their class.

The need by general education teachers and staff members for additional professional development opportunities in the areas of RTI, collaboration, and inclusive practices is apparent, as these were reoccurring themes about these areas in their responses and questions following the initial professional developments presented. Additionally, general education teachers and staff members also need professional development in the area of how to support students with special needs in the classroom or how to use accommodations in the classroom. General education teachers overwhelmingly are reporting to the SST coordinator at the school site that they need
more information on accommodation and interventions and how to apply these supports in the general education classroom. If these teachers obtain continued professional development opportunities on how to use accommodations in the classroom, they could better support students with or without an IEP.

Furthermore, general education teachers and staff member shared, both before and after the professional development sessions via informal discussion and responses to the professional developments, that they need additional information how to support students with challenging behavior. Staff member identified a need to address both unmotivated student behavior and defiant behavior that influence the student’s learning or the learning of others. Staff and general education teachers seemed particularly interested in learning about behavior support plans (BSP) and how a student could receive counseling.

Given the limited time frame for this project (less than one traditional school year), it has been a challenge to determine the effectiveness of the professional development presentations. The evaluation of the effectiveness of this professional development series was limited to the responses and questions presented on the post professional development questions forms, observations, and reports of staff reaching out to both the SST coordinator and the current author. This professional development series was deemed effective based on the fact that after the professional development series, the SST coordinator observed a greater interest in documenting and using the new SST process as many teachers asked to collaborate with her in starting the SST process and documenting the interventions they are currently using. In addition, the support staff, including the special education teacher, speech therapist, and school psychologist,
received fewer referrals for special education evaluation by the general education staff when no interventions had been performed compared to the previous year. Furthermore, it was observed by the administration, SST coordinator and support staff that a greater collaborative effort was being put forth to assist students with and without disabilities as observed by classroom observation and data assessment meeting where individual student data is analyzed. General education teachers started asking questions, seeking answers, and became more active in the IEP process. While the school site has not altered completely, the effects of the professional development series is evident and a move in the right direction has been made to support all students.

However, given the fact that the professional development series was just implemented, the full effect is not determined at this time. The future steps to support staff will be determined by the increased use of the SST process documentation forms, the decreased referral of student to initial assessment to determine eligibility for special education services without previous RTI and SST documentation, the increased collaborative discussions between general education teachers and support staff, the increased collaboration and inclusion of student with IEP, the increased compliance in providing accommodation to students with IEP, and the increased representation of general education teachers at IEP meetings. These future steps will require continually supporting the educational process described in this professional development series.

**Recommendations for Future Practice and Research**

From the questions following the professional development and questions posed to the SST coordinator and current author, it is recommended that future profession
development sessions be implemented at the school site and continued focus and support be given to general education teachers. The recommendation for future professional development and supports hinge on the use of collaborative and inclusive practices, which is the basis for the changing roles of general education as defined by IDEA, and should be an ongoing practice in schools. The focus of these professional development sessions should be primarily on providing adequate academic and behavior accommodations, modifications, interventions, and supports in the general education classroom, and using collaborative and inclusive methods to meet all students’ needs in the general education setting. These continued professional development opportunities would require multiple collaborative sessions with a multidisciplinary team to address the knowledge and skill deficiency of the general education staff in order to provide adequate support to service students with special needs in the general education setting.

As discussed in the literature review for this project, there is little evidence in educational literature to support that professional development is linked to large-scale changes within educators’ practice. However, there is literature that strongly recommends the use of professional development to support general education teachers in acquiring knowledge on collaborative practices and acquiring knowledge on common philosophies and perspective that supports inclusive practices. Therefore, it is the current author’s recommendation that providing additional professional development sessions and opportunities for collaborative practices can alter educational practices in the classroom and across the school site. Once these professional development series can be found
effective, they can be shared throughout the district or could be shared at a conference that focuses on RTI, collaboration, and inclusion.

Additionally, the current author’s recommendation for research is that the impact of this professional development series be analyzed over time to determine the link between this professional development series and actual transformation in educators’ practices. By doing later analysis to determine effectiveness of this project, it could be used as a foundation for future research. However, substantially more research should be conducted in this area to determine if, in fact, professional development is a useful method to facilitate general educators’ acquisition of knowledge that they need in the areas of collaboration and inclusive practices and if increased knowledge will influence their practice in a way that supports students with disabilities. In short, continued professional development series should be provided in the hopes that general education teachers will gain the knowledge and competency in the areas of collaboration and inclusive practices and this practice can be used to further a growing body of evidence that this method will support students with disabilities in general education classrooms.
APPENDIX A: First Professional Development Session PowerPoint and Handouts
SST Process and Initial Referrals to Special Education

A Professional Development for Staff Members at Riverbank Elementary

Purpose:

- Give information on who to contact with your concerns regarding an individual student.

- Guide you through the new SST process and initial IEP process.

- Encourage the RTI process with a focus on collaboration and inclusion of all students.
A Look At Our School

- Highest rates of special education students in the district.
- Last year 8% of our students were receiving special education services (not including speech only special education services).
- Currently, we already have 8 students to initially assess.

Who’s Who

- SST Coordinator: Judi Moreno (Nicole Wilson)
- 504 Plans: Michael Woodcock/Shamryn Cole
- School Psychologist: Juanita Patterson
- Speech Services: Jeanie Winston
- Special Education (RSP): Shanna Espinoza* & Elizabeth Burton
- ELD Teacher: Laura Abe
My background: Why Special Education?

- I was a selective mute.
- I majored in Psychology to learn more about people and learning.
- I taught in general education in Chico, Oroville, San Jose, Lincoln, and Elk Grove before coming to this school.
- I have taught every grade from kindergarten to sixth grade as a general education teacher.
- I found that I was inadequately prepared to deal with some of the challenges of education, particularly working with special needs students.
- So when the opportunity arose, I chose to learn more.

Laws: Key Components

- **Educational Code (Ed Code):** The large legal body that covers the various laws that regulate the California education system.

- **No Child Left Behind (NCLB):** Requires annual testing (CST) to determine educational effectiveness and growth. Key components include: Highly qualified teachers and special education accountability on assessments.

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** Right of student with disabilities to receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE). Key components based on 2004 reauthorization include: Least Restrictive Environment (Inclusion), Individual Education Plans (IEP), and the right and responsibilities of educators and parents.

- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (504):** Prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities in places that receive federal funding.
How do struggling student get help in schools?

- RTI and Interventions
- SST Process
- 504 Plan
- Special Education (IEP): RSP or SDC

- What unique quality do all of these have?

- They are either exclusively a general education function or rely heavy on general education inclusion.

- But don’t worry with collaboration there is help!

RTI2: Designing School-Wide Systems for Student Success

- **Academic Systems**
  - Intensive, Individual Interventions
    - Individual Students
    - Assessment-based
    - High Intensity
  - Targeted Group Interventions
    - Some students (at-risk)
    - High efficiency
    - Rapid response

- **Behavioral Systems**
  - Intensive, Individual Interventions
    - Individual Students
    - Assessment-based
    - Intense, durable procedures
  - Targeted Group Interventions
    - Some students (at-risk)
    - High efficiency
    - Rapid response
  - Universal Interventions
    - All settings, all students
    - Preventive, proactive
Intervention Plan

- Level I, II, and III interventions are outlined in our Intervention Plan.

- Note: This RTI Intervention plan is under review at the district level.

- *This is a process in process, but still needs to be done per the law.*

- *Documentation of each level is critical.*

Let’s begin...

- Level I: High quality instruction and behavior supports.

  Student A
  Student B
  Not responding to Level I instruction

  Then begin Level II Interventions.
Level II Interventions

- Use Level II interventions outlined in the intervention plan.

- Collaborate with grade level colleagues, administration, and service providers to gain support.

- Realize that change and growth will not occur immediately.

- Accommodate the student and modify curriculum if needed, but document these accommodations and modifications.

- Record and document interventions on the Level II Intervention Form on an individual basis or as part of Teaming and Regrouping.

Teaming and Regrouping Level II Intervention Form

![Teaming and Regrouping Level II Intervention Form](image-url)
Level II (and Level III) Intervention forms

- Needs to be completed for each individual if moving forward with the SST Process.
- Key Components:
  - What is the concern?
  - What is the data that supports this concern?
  - What is the goal and objective of Level II or Level III intervention?
  - What intervention is being used and how is it being used?
  - How will these interventions be assessed (i.e. evaluation criteria)?
  - The details...who, when, how?

Review Level II Intervention forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>SCHOOL YEAR</th>
<th>TEACHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progress Monitoring</td>
<td>Start Intervention Review Date:</td>
<td>Sufficient Progress?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Intervention Review Date:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Monitoring:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sufficient Progress?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Determination Date:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An Instructional Intervention is a series of planned activities that are different from those activities normally occurring in the child's regular education program.

Level II: Intervention
- Who is included: Student identified with identified disabilities, who has not responded to level I.
- Program of Instruction: Programs, strategies, and procedures designed and employed to supplement enhance, and support level II.
- Grouping: Small group or level group during learning and progressing (T&T).
- Time: Minimum of 50 minutes per day, 3 times per week of specialized curriculum and/or support school for a minimum of 12 per week.
- Assessment: Progress monitoring at least once weekly on target skill to ensure adequate progress and learning.
- Interventional: Additional personnel (e.g., a classroom teacher, a learning lab teacher, an intervention specialist).
- Setting: Appropriate setting: may be within or outside of the regular classroom.
- Possible interventions to implement for Tier II:
  - Read 100
  - System 44
  - 10 minutes per day x 2 times per week on computer-based intervention program, treatment target, imagine learning English, other, in-class library, ELD room, or after school.
  - Teaching and engaging 5X2 = 10 weeks at content level (ELA)
  - After six weeks, if strategic intervention is not working, change to intensive T&I group
  - After school intervention 2X1 week, using intervention guides for math or ELA
  - Levels instructional group instruction during S&H, teacher, group 2X1 week.
### Level II Intervention Form

- **What is the referring concern?** (To be stated in specific and measurable terms.)

- **What data supports the existence of the concern?** (Baseline data.)

- **What is the goal to resolve this concern?** (To be stated in specific and measurable terms.)

- **Describe the intervention to be attempted.** (Please complete all information as noted.)

- **List specific objective(s) of the intervention.**
- **Describe the activities for each objective(s) involved.**
- **List the specific evaluation criteria to be utilized.**

<p>| NAME OF PERSON CONDUCTING THIS INTERVENTION: |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME SPAN</th>
<th>BEGIN DATE</th>
<th>END DATE</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Progress Monitoring Checks to be Completed</td>
<td>Tapered intervention was successful in meeting the child’s needs. This intervention will be continued in the current setting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Monitoring:</td>
<td>Planned intervention was not successful in meeting the child’s needs. Another instructional intervention will be conducted to meet the child’s needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions:</td>
<td>Planned intervention was not successful in meeting the child’s needs. Mentor for Student Study Team is being considered due to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### After the first 6 weeks...

**Student A**
- Makes improvement.
- Then...keep doing this intervention!!
- Do not initiate the SST Process.

**Student B**
- Not making improvement.
- Then...
Let’s follow Student B’s Path

- Continue with Level II interventions. Start second 6 week intervention session. Make changes as needed
- Monitor progress on Level II Intervention form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>SCHOOL YEAR</th>
<th>TEACHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT</td>
<td>Progress Monitoring: First Intervention Review Date:</td>
<td>Sufficient Progress?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progress Monitoring: Second Intervention Review Date:</td>
<td>Sufficient Progress?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progress Monitoring: Final Determination Date</td>
<td>Sufficient Progress?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student B is still not responding to interventions....

- If after two sessions of 6 week Level II interventions (totaling 12 weeks) have been unsuccessful, then begin the SST process.
- Contact our SST Coordinator: Judi Moreno (Nicole Wilson after December).
  - The SST Coordinator will start an SST file and make every attempt to schedule an SST within two weeks as part of Step 1 of the Intervention and SST Process.
  - General education teachers will complete the Teacher Narrative at that time.
Teacher Narrative

- As part of Step 1, the general education teacher should include the Teacher Narrative (4 pages) with the SST referral.
Then the SST Coordinator will...

- Step 2: Check the student’s hearing and vision.
- Step 3: Schedule and invite the parent to the SST meeting.
- Step 4: Hold the first SST meeting.
  - Teachers should be prepared to discuss interventions used, recent assessment data (documentation of Level II Interventions), work samples, and current grades.

SST Meeting

- Step 5:
  - SST Team determines that Level III Intervention is not appropriate at this time.
    - Possible reasons for this include inadequate vision or hearing abilities, being an English language learner, attendance issues, or the student may be eligible for a 504 Plan.
    - (SST Process ends)
  - SST Team determines there is a need for Level III Interventions.
    - (Parents notified that this process may result in a referral for special education assessment to determine if they are eligible for services.)
After 6 weeks of Level III Interventions

- Step 6:
  - Parents invited to the follow up SST meeting.
  - Results (documentation and data) of Level III interventions are reviewed.
Follow Up SST Meeting

- **Step 6:**

**Level III Interventions successful:**
Continue these interventions for a predetermined time and continue with another Follow Up SST.

**Level III Interventions unsuccessful:**
1) Continue with Level III intervention for another 6 weeks, because student is making slow progress.
2) Choose another Level III intervention and try that for intervention for 6 weeks.
After 12 weeks of Level III Intervention

- Step 7: Parent are invited to a second Follow Up SST Meeting.
  - Level III Interventions are reviewed.
  - At this point there should be 12 weeks of Level III intervention data completed on the Level III Intervention form.

- Step 7:
  - 12 weeks of Level III Interventions are successful:
    1) Continue Level III Interventions with regular Follow Up SST Meetings.
    2) The SST team decides that a referral to the School Psychologist is needed based on this intervention process documentation.

  - 12 weeks of Level III Interventions are unsuccessful:
    A referral to the School Psychologist is made to determine if the student is eligible to receive special education services.
Ending the SST Process/Referral for Special Education Referral

- Step 8: SST Coordinator gathers all documentation and submits it to the Special Education Teacher. This should include:
  - Level II Intervention form.
  - Teacher Narrative.
  - Level III Intervention form.
  - All SST meeting documents and notes.

- With this information and in collaboration with the School Psychologist an initial assessment plan will be sent home for the parent to sign.

While you go through the SST Process remember....

- Don’t give up on this student!!!

- Continue to serve this student with high quality Level I, Level II, and Level III interventions.

- Attend SST meetings and be willing to try new interventions.

- Keep documenting progress and ongoing concerns and successes.

- Collaborate with grade level colleagues, administration, and service providers, including the special education teachers on campus as needed (set up a time to meet).
Unusual Circumstances...

- Extreme behaviors that are unsafe, such as self-injurious behaviors or assultive behaviors.
  - Contact Administrator and School Psychologist.

- Parents may request assessment to determine if their child is eligible for special education services.
  - Teachers should encourage the RTI and SST process!!!

Clearing up some misconceptions:
Just because this, does not mean that.

- Just because a child ...
  - comes from a undesirable home life,
  - has low academic knowledge or skills (i.e. below grade level) or lacks social skills,
  - cannot “keep up” with the other students,
  - or has less than desirable behaviors

does necessarily not mean they will qualify for special education.
Initial Referrals

- Once referral to special education assessments the School Psychologist has 15 days to respond with an assessment plan sent to the parents.

- Parents have 15 days to review and return the assessment plan.

- Once the assessment plan is signed the assessment team has 60 days to complete the initial assessment.

- Initial IEPs are scheduled within those 60 days.

That means....

- That from the time of the initial request it takes up to 75 to 90 days to complete this process and requires anywhere from 15-25 hours of assessment and preparation for the initial IEP.

- During that time, general education teachers or other staff members may be asked to fill out questionnaires and other forms to assist with the assessment process.
  - Please return these in a timely manner (ASAP).
  - Please allow for student to be pulled out of class for assessments.

- In addition, general education teachers should be prepared to provide work samples and other input as requested and attend the initial IEP meeting.
The Initial IEP

- The law requires all general education teachers to be at the IEP.

- At the initial meeting a Multidisciplinary Report outlines assessment results and guides the team on determining whether or not the student qualifies for special education services.

- The ultimate determination of whether or not a student qualifies for special education services is a team decision, but must reflect the data and be in accordance with the law.

- Parents can decline special education services.

Qualifying Disabilities

- There are 13 qualifying disabilities including:
  - Autism
  - Visual Impairment, including blindness
  - Deafness
  - Deaf-Blindness
  - Hearing Impairment
  - Speech and Language Impairment
  - Specific Learning Disability
  - Orthopedic Impairment
  - Other Health Impairment
  - Intellectual Disability (formerly MR)
  - Emotional Disturbance
  - Traumatic Brain Injury
  - Multiple Disabilities
Models of qualifying

- **Discrepancy Model**: There is a significant discrepancy between the student ability and achievement as measured by standardized assessments.

- **RTI Model**: Students are not responding to researched-based interventions through the various RTI tiers or levels.
  - *Current law strongly encourages this model.*

Qualifying for Special Education

- A couple things to remember...
  - Special Education is a *service* and not a place and may not be permanent.
  - General education and special education educators are meant to work together to deliver the best instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The student is “our” student.
  - Special Education does *not* diagnose a student, they *qualify* him or her for special education services.
  - Medical diagnosis and educational qualification criteria do not match up.
  - ADHD is not considered a disability (per se), but at times student with disabilities can be placed on an IEP. *However, usually students with ADHD are supported through a 504 Plan.*
Questions and Conclusion

• Please fill out the *Questions and Additional Information Needed* form and we will answer your questions as soon as possible.

• Thankyou!!!

References

Riverbank Elementary School

**Intervention Plan**

When students are experiencing difficulty, initial efforts should be made to provide level I interventions (see below) in the classroom. When these are not effective, level II interventions (see below) should be put in place. Students at level II interventions will be discussed at Assessment Meetings. Students should be referred to level II interventions only after level I interventions have been implemented for a minimum of six weeks. If, after six weeks of level two interventions, students are not making progress, proceed to level three interventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level I: Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is Involved</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programs Of Instruction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grouping</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interventionist</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possible interventions to implement for Level I</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Explicit and systematic small group instruction within the regular classroom (workshop/teaming and regrouping)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Instruction that has been broken down into manageable steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Instruction has been provided using a different teaching strategy (Destination Math, Intervention Guide, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Instruction was provided using a different response mechanism (i.e.: tape recorded, dictated and recorded, draw an example, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Student has been provided with additional practice activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Student has been provided with immediate and specific feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level II: Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is Involved</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Of Instruction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grouping</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interventionist</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possible interventions to implement for level II</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Explicit and systematic small group instruction outside the regular classroom (after school intervention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Supplemental instruction has been provided using a different teaching strategy (Destination Math, Intervention Guide)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Student has been provided with additional practice activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Instruction has been provided targeting specific areas of weakness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Level III interventions will be put in place after the Intervention and SST Process has been followed. Students may receive level III interventions after six weeks of school if this is decided through the SST meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level III: Intervention</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is Involved</strong></td>
<td>Student identified with marked difficulties, and who has not responded to level I or level II efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Of Instruction</strong></td>
<td>Programs, strategies, and procedures designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support level I, level II, and level III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grouping</strong></td>
<td>Individual (1:1) or (1:2) with designated staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Minimum of 30 minutes per day, 3-5x per week on specialized curriculum and 1:1 tutorial for a minimum of 3x per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Progress monitoring at least once weekly (2x preferred) on target skill to ensure adequate progress and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interventionist</strong></td>
<td>Additional personnel (e.g., a classroom teacher, paraprofessional, a learning lab teacher, an intervention specialist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
<td>Appropriate setting; may be within or outside of the regular classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possible interventions to implement for Tier III:
- 30 minutes per day 3x per week on computer based intervention program
- 30 minutes per day 3x per week on intensive, targeted intervention program
- After six weeks, if intervention is not effective maintain 30 minutes per day and increase to 5x per week on intensive intervention program
- After six weeks, if intervention is not effective, incorporate 1:1 tutorial services for a minimum for 3x per week in addition to intervention program
## Intervention and SST Process

This intervention process begins after students have received six weeks of level I and/or six weeks of level II intervention (see Intervention Plan document.) Students involved in this stage of the intervention process will already have been receiving intervention in either teaming and regrouping and/or after school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date: Level II Interventions were not successful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of SST meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Guide</th>
<th>Notes/Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are referred by a teacher or administrator to the SST chairperson using SST Teacher Narrative. Attach documentation of Level II intervention documentation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SST chairperson will begin an intervention folder for data collection and follow-up.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SST will make every effort to meet within two weeks of the referral date.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If this is a “Speech Only” consideration, the Speech/Language pathologist should be notified and invited to the SST meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a problem exists in any other area than articulation, voice, or fluency the teacher must proceed in the SST process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date: Screening completed/requested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date given to chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date parent notified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Guide</th>
<th>Notes/Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SST Chairperson will obtain the completed hearing/vision screening results form. If the data is more than 6 months old, request another hearing/vision screening from the nurse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once screening is completed, the nurse will give the screening results to the SST chairperson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the student fails the hearing/vision screening, the nurse or SST chairperson will contact the parent. The parent will be informed that a delay in addressing hearing and/or vision problems may postpone the SST process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the SST has not received a follow-up from the parent within two weeks, the chairperson will inform a school administrator.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date: Letter sent</th>
<th>Date parent contacted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Guide</th>
<th>Notes/Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SST chairperson will invite the parent(s) to a SST meeting. Send the SST information brochure to the parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the parent does not attend, the chairperson will contact the parent to discuss the results of the meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent does not have to attend, but will always be invited and contacted after the meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of meeting</td>
<td>STEP 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The SST meets. The regular education teacher will present all student information to the SST members. If articulation, voice or fluency is the only issue, the speech/language pathologist will be able to assist at this point. Please bring work samples, and recent assessment data. If applicable, please bring behavior records/notes illustrating concerns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Date of determination | Please check the determination made by the SST:  
  - The SST determines that a Level III Intervention is not appropriate at this time. Decision is documented on the SST Meeting Summary.  
  """If this choice is made, the process ends and the student will remain in regular education with or without interventions. """

-OR-

  - The SST determines there is a need for Level III Intensive Intervention. The SST selects an appropriate Level III Intensive Intervention for each area of concern (reading, math, language, behavior) and writes it on the INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTION OR BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION FORM. The SST chairperson documents the decision on the SST Meeting Summary. A Level III Intensive Intervention Form is completed and monitored/tracked for at least six (6) weeks.

  A staff member is assigned the responsibility to conduct assessments during the intervention period.

  An assessment is conducted at least every three weeks during the implementation period. The person conducting the assessment will enter the results of the assessment on the recording form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date parent contacted</th>
<th>Date letter sent</th>
<th>Date of meeting</th>
<th>Date of determination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The SST chairperson will explain to the parent/guardian that interventions are developed to help the student to succeed, and that this process may result in a referral for special education assessment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of letter sent</th>
<th>After six weeks of level III intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s) are invited to the follow-up SST meeting. Send the invitation to the parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The SST meets to monitor the level III Intensive Intervention. Results of level III Intensive Intervention are reviewed. Please check determination made by the SST:  

- The Level III Intensive Intervention is determined to be successful. The teacher continues the Level III Intensive Intervention process for as long as needed with follow-up by the SST on a regular (pre-determined) basis. Results of individual assessments (at least six) are reviewed using graphs and data from the Data Director system. Information from computer-based interventions must be provided.  

A Level III Intensive Intervention is monitored/tracked weekly for six weeks using assessments. The principal or designee and teacher will review information from the assessments each week.
### STEP 7

**After twelve weeks of level III intervention**

- The Parents are invited to the SST meeting.
- Send the invitation to the parents.
- The SST meets to evaluate the Level III Intensive Intervention. Results of Level III Intensive Intervention are reviewed.

Please check the determination made by the SST:

- (YES) The Level III Intensive intervention is determined to be successful. The teacher continues the Level III intensive Intervention process for as long as needed with follow-up by the SST on a regular (pre-determined) basis. *(THE STUDENT REMAINS IN REGULAR EDUCATION)*

**If this choice is made, the process ends and the student will remain in regular education with or without interventions. ***

OR

- (YES) The Level III Intensive intervention is determined to be successful but the student will be referred to the school psychologist to determine if an assessment will be completed to determine if the student is eligible to receive special education services.

**OR**

- (NC) The Level III Intensive Intervention is determined to be unsuccessful and the student is referred to the school psychologist to determine if an assessment will be completed to determine if the student is eligible to receive special education services.

If assessment is warranted, an assessment plan will be given to parent to be signed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date letter sent</th>
<th>Date of meeting</th>
<th>Date of determination</th>
<th>Date parent is informed</th>
<th>Date parent given assessment plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date folder is submitted to special education teacher.</td>
<td>STEP 8. The SST chairperson gathers all information and documentation collected during the SST process and submits the folder to the special education teacher. The special education teacher will plan an IEP meeting to discuss the results of the assessments and to review interventions provided to determine with the IEP team, either through assessment or through evidence of attempted intervention, that the student is eligible for special education services. The special education teacher will invite the parent(s) to an IEP meeting. THE REGULAR EDUCATION SST PROCESS ENDS.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date invitation sent</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Riverbank Elementary School

Level II Instructional Intervention Documentation

INSTRUCTIONS: Use appropriate informal or formal assessments and strategies. The assessments provide data to measure progress and inform instruction. The data will assist you in designing and implementing curriculum-based instructional interventions. Use this form for EACH intervention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>SCHOOL YEAR</th>
<th>TEACHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT</td>
<td>Progress Monitoring</td>
<td>First Intervention Review Date: Sufficient Progress? Yes No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progress Monitoring</td>
<td>Second Intervention Review Date: Sufficient Progress? Yes No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progress Monitoring</td>
<td>Final Determination Date: Sufficient Progress? Yes No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An instructional intervention is a series of planned activities that are different from those activities normally occurring in the child's regular education program.

Level II: Intervention

Who is Involved: Student identified with marked difficulties, and who has not responded to level 1 efforts

Program Of Instruction: Programs, strategies, and procedures designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support level II.

Grouping: Small group or level group during teaming and regrouping (T&R)

Time: Minimum of 30 minutes per day, 3-5x per week on specialized curriculum and/or after school for a minimum of 2x per week

Assessment: Progress monitoring at least once weekly on target skill to ensure adequate progress and learning

Interventionist: Additional personnel (e.g., a classroom teacher, a learning lab teacher, an intervention specialist)

Setting: Appropriate setting; may be within or outside of the regular classroom

Possible interventions to implement for Tier II

- Read 160
- 15 minutes per day 3x per week on computer-based intervention program, Destination Math, Imagine Learning English, other, in class, library, ELD room, or after school
- Team teaching and regrouping 5x week for 30 minutes at student's level (ELA)
- After six weeks, if strategic intervention is not working, change to intensive T&R group
- After school intervention 2x week, using intervention guides for math and ELA
- Leveled small group instruction during OCR workshop, 2X week
# Riverbank Elementary School
## Level II Intervention Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the referring concern? (To be stated in specific and measurable terms.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What data supports the existence of the concern? <em>(Baseline data)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the goal to resolve this concern? (To be stated in specific and measurable terms.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the intervention to be attempted. <em>(Please complete all information as noted.)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List specific objective(s) of this intervention.</th>
<th>Describe the activities for each objective(s) involved.</th>
<th>List the specific evaluation criteria to be utilized.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**NAME OF PERSON CONDUCTING INTERVENTION:**

**POSITION:**

**TIMESPAN:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEGIN DATE:</th>
<th>END DATE (Cannot exceed 18 school weeks):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Frequency:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Progress Monitoring Checks to Be Completed:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Progress Monitoring:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Evaluations of success of intervention *(Please check the appropriate response and complete all information.)***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planned intervention was successful in meeting child’s needs. This intervention will be continued in the current setting.</th>
<th>Planned intervention was not successful in meeting the child’s needs. Another instructional intervention will be conducted to attempt to meet child’s needs.</th>
<th>Planned intervention was not successful in meeting the child’s needs. Referral for Student Study Team is being considered due to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Level II Intervention Form (Teaming and Regrouping)

Complete one form for each group.

Intervention Group __________________ Grade level ________
What is the Baseline Data? (describe what is being measured, ie: wpm, comprehension scores, etc.)
Progress Monitoring- Use same assessment as baseline data and re-assess.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Name</th>
<th>Baseline Data</th>
<th>Progress Monitoring Date</th>
<th>Progress Made</th>
<th>Progress Monitoring Date</th>
<th>Progress Made</th>
<th>Progress Monitoring Date</th>
<th>Progress Made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Riverbank Elementary School

## TEACHER NARRATIVE

**GENERAL DIRECTIONS:** Please complete the following sections: Identifying and General Information, Educational and Characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDENTIFYING INFORMATION</th>
<th>GENERAL INFORMATION ON THIS REQUEST:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAME OF STUDENT</td>
<td>REFERRING TEACHER’S SIGNATURE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td>DATE COMPLETED:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE OF BIRTH (from cumulative record)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade entered our school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURRENT EDUCATIONAL HISTOR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURRENT GRADE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEARS AT OUR SCHOOL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE – please check appropriate box</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular (explain below)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DOCUMENTATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTION**

Please check below, as appropriate:
- Attached documentation to support Tier 2 instructional interventions that have been attempted to remediate the identified problem area(s):
- An instructional intervention would not be appropriate (please explain):

For what specific reason(s) was SST requested?

How does this student learn best? (Check all that apply)
- With an adult
- Large group activities
- Morning
- With peers
- Small group activities
- Afternoon
- One on one
- Individual activities
- No identified

Number of schools attended (see cumulative)

Indicate any current or past supplemental programs/services:
- Learning lab
- OTHER (Specify):
- Language lab
- preschool

Has a previous request for SST been made?
- YES
- NO

If yes, please attach ALL RELEVANT information from previous requests for SST, such as summaries or any reports, etc.

**PARENT CONTACT**

- Have parents been contacted?
- YES
- NO
- Are parent’s aware of child’s problem?
- YES
- NO
- Parent’s reaction?

**NATIVE LANGUAGE**

- (if not English): Student:

**AVAILABLE MEDICAL HISTORY**

- Attach any reports or information provided by the parent(s) that is not maintained in the cumulative record

**RESULTS OF PREVIOUS MEDICAL TESTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEST NAME</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>DATE GIVEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

---

**ATTENTION**

Describe activity which best holds attention:
EDUCATIONAL: Complete this section to describe the student's abilities in academic curriculum areas/subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD UTILIZED BY TEACHER</th>
<th>STUDENT’S PREFERRED LEARNING STYLE</th>
<th>STUDENT’S PREFERRED ASSESSMENT STYLE</th>
<th>TYPE OF ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY OBSERVED BY TEACHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - One to one 5 - Independent studies</td>
<td>A - Auditory</td>
<td>O - Oral answers</td>
<td>RD - Reading Decoding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - Small group 6 - Discussion</td>
<td>V - Visual</td>
<td>T - True/False</td>
<td>RC - Reading Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - Lecture 7 - OTHER (Specify)</td>
<td>K - Kinesthetic</td>
<td>MC - Multiple Choice</td>
<td>L - Listening Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - Large group</td>
<td>DK - Don’t Know (child too young)</td>
<td>F - Fill in the blank</td>
<td>W - Writing Mechanics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For CURRICULUM AREA(S)/SUBJECT(S), list each of the current curriculum area(s)/subject(s) in which the student is having academic difficulty. For each curriculum area(s)/subject(s) listed, please supply the following.

1. For GRADES column, provide the most current grade(s).
2. For CURRENT INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD(S), STUDENT LEARNING STYLE(S) and STUDENT ASSESSMENT STYLE(S), please use the code charts at the top of the page. Place the appropriate number/letter code in each column.
3. For TYPE OF ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY, indicate the type of difficulty the student is having by placing a check (✓) in the applicable column(s). (For example: Reading, Writing, Math, Reading Comprehension, Listening Comprehension.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRICULUM AREA/SUBJECT</th>
<th>GRADES( ) [use most current grading period]</th>
<th>CURRENT INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD(S)</th>
<th>STUDENT LEARNING STYLE(S)</th>
<th>STUDENT ASSESSMENT STYLE(S)</th>
<th>TYPE OF ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHARACTERISTICS: Please check [ ] those characteristics that the student exhibits CONSISTENTLY. If the child exhibits none of the characteristics, check &quot;no problems observed&quot;. Please circle appropriate characteristic(s) if there are multiple options per item. Written explanation and/or additional information may be requested at the IEP Meeting.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENERAL PHYSICAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO PROBLEM(S) OBSERVED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always complains of feeling sick</td>
<td>Wears glasses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is continually thirsty</td>
<td>Complains of blurred/double vision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating problems</td>
<td>Frequently squints/has trouble seeing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wears hearing aids</td>
<td>Complains of not being able to see the board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has frequent earaches</td>
<td>Holds printed material too close/too far away</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has fluid draining from ears</td>
<td>Has improper eye movements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes prescription medicine</td>
<td>Seizures observed in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROSS MOTOR</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO PROBLEM(S) OBSERVED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in hopping, skipping, jumping</td>
<td>Difficulty throwing/batting a ball</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty going up/down stairs alternating feet</td>
<td>Problems with upper body motor movement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with balancing</td>
<td>Problems with lower body motor movement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FINE MOTOR</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO PROBLEM(S) OBSERVED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems with grasping and releasing</td>
<td>Difficulty cutting paper with scissors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with reaching/inserting motions</td>
<td>Difficulty in tying/buttonging/unzipping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot transfer objects from hand to hand</td>
<td>Difficulty in holding crayon/pencil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty building a tower of blocks</td>
<td>Difficulty staying within lines when writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL SKILLS</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO PROBLEM(S) OBSERVED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely interacts with classmates</td>
<td>Does not ask for help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is frequently alone during lunch/recess</td>
<td>Does not look at the person talking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is frequently teased by other children</td>
<td>Cannot deal with being left out</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Usually withdraws from touch</td>
<td>Does not talk in group</td>
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<td>Usually withdraws from touch</td>
<td>Does not share with others</td>
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<td>Often engages in rocking/ repetitive movement</td>
<td>Does not apologize</td>
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<td>Unwillingness to express his/her feelings</td>
<td>OTHER (Please specify):</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO PROBLEM(S) OBSERVED</strong></td>
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<td>Need for high degree of supervision</td>
<td>Inadequate skills: exchange of money</td>
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<td>Constant thumb or finger sucking/hair chewing</td>
<td>Inadequate skills: appropriate personal hygiene skills</td>
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<td>Difficulty feeding self, not toilet trained</td>
<td>Unable to wash/hand independently</td>
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<td><strong>BEHAVIOR</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO PROBLEM(S) OBSERVED</strong></td>
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<td>Unable to interact with minimal friction</td>
<td>Frequently found to be untruthful</td>
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<td>Difficulty staying on task</td>
<td>Mate/refuses to speak</td>
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<td>Easily frustrated</td>
<td>Threatens others</td>
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<td>Frequently quarrels, scolds, or slurs</td>
<td>Threw others</td>
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<td>Denies sick days/feels better</td>
<td>Fails to turn in homework</td>
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<td>Refuses to be alone/withdrawn/isolated</td>
<td>Fails to complete assignments</td>
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<td>Insults or aggressive</td>
<td>Difficulty paying attention to task/doctor</td>
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<td>Easily loses temper</td>
<td>Disciplinary actions have been initiated by principal or other school authorities</td>
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<td>Acts before thinking – impulsive</td>
<td>Teases others</td>
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**Emotional** | **No Problems Observed**
--- | ---
Upset by any change in routine | Exhibits unremedied self-blame/self-criticism
Pronounced fear of failure | Unresponsiveness
Irritable for greater part of school day | Tells of extremely strange/logical thoughts or fears
Appears withdrawn from peers | Creates imaginary/fantasy situations in an attempt to escape reality
Depressed for most of the day | Experienced significant changes in activity level/concentration/school grades
Lack of interest in pleasurable activities | OTHER (Please specify):
Talks about suicide or death wishes | **Receptive Language** | **No Problems Observed**
--- | ---
Difficulty comprehending new ideas | Difficulty following multi-step verbal directions
Does not understand written directions | Does not understand vocabulary words related to curriculum
Cannot identify simple objects | Does not understand information in class that is presented orally
Does not demonstrate use of position words; on, under, front, behind, beside, over | Does not understand age-appropriate vocabulary
**Expressive Language** | **No Problems Observed**
--- | ---
Difficulty organizing thoughts | Hesitant to engage in verbal interaction
Nonverbal | Does not use spoken compound sentences
Uses immature word/sentence patterns | Silent much of time
Uses oral grammar incorrectly | Cannot retell a story
Difficulty asking questions | Difficulty telling a story
Verbal responses do not relate to questions asked/subject under discussion | Does not name objects/actions in pictures
**Speech** | **No Problems Observed**
--- | ---
Substitutes one sound for another | Sometimes too loud or too soft
Omits sounds | Consistently hoarseness/breathiness
Distorted sounds | Nasal sounding – like a constant cold
Difficulty sequencing sounds | Pitch too high or too low
Difficulty understanding | Voice “lost” by end of day or during day
Able to self-correct errors | Quality makes difficult to understand
Uses dialect | Quality resulting from culture
**Visual Perception** | **No Problems Observed**
--- | ---
Visual tracking difficulties | Transposes letters
Visually confuses objects/letters/numbers | Prefers auditory activities
Difficulty discriminating between words with similar appearance | Difficulty identifying shapes in various sizes and positions
Continues to demonstrate difficulty in reversing or inverting letters of alphabet after age 6 | Difficulty identifying rhyming words
**Auditory Perception** | **No Problems Observed**
--- | ---
Difficulty understanding spoken directions | Difficulty identifying rhyming words
Does not orally form phrase/sentence correctly | Difficulty sequencing syllables/letters in speaking
Difficulty sounding out word, sound by sound | OTHER (Please specify):
Level III Instructional Intervention Documentation

INSTRUCTIONS: Use appropriate Informal assessments and strategies. Assessments should be done weekly. Assessment results should be entered into Data Director. Refer to Intervention Plan document for suggested interventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT:</th>
<th>GRADE:</th>
<th>SCHOOL YEAR:</th>
<th>TEACHER:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT:</td>
<td>First Intervention Review Date: (6 weeks)</td>
<td>Sufficient Progress?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Second Intervention Review Date: (12 weeks)</td>
<td>Sufficient Progress?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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An instructional intervention is a series of planned activities that are different from those activities normally occurring in the child’s regular education program.

What is the referring concern? (To be stated in specific and measurable terms.)

What data supports the existence of the concern? (Baseline data)

What is the goal to resolve this concern? (To be stated in specific and measurable terms.)

Describe the intervention to be attempted. (Please complete all information as noted.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List specific objective(s) of this intervention</th>
<th>Describe the activities for each objective(s) involved.</th>
<th>List the specific evaluation criteria to be utilized.</th>
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**NAME OF PERSON CONDUCTING INTERVENTION:**

**POSITION:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TIMESPAN:</th>
<th>BEGIN DATE:</th>
<th>END DATE (Cannot exceed 12 school weeks):</th>
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**Frequency:**

**Duration:**

**Progress Monitoring Checks to Be Completed:**

- Frequency of Progress Monitoring:
- Compare baseline data to goal data. Attach documentation.

**Evaluations of success of intervention (Please check the appropriate response and complete all information.):**

- Planned intervention was successful in meeting child’s needs. This intervention will be continued in the current setting.
- Planned intervention was not successful in meeting the child’s needs. Another instructional intervention will be conducted to attempt to meet child’s needs.
- Planned intervention was not successful in meeting the child’s needs. Referral for Child Study is being considered due to:
Student Study Team Teacher Referral

Student's Name: ___________________ Grade: ______ Teacher: ___________________

Primary Language: ___________________ Date of Birth: ____________

Referral Date: ______________

A complete referral packet will include:

1) A completed Teacher Narrative (attached).
2) A copy of Level II Instructional Intervention Documentation with both first and second intervention review dates and progress monitoring completed.
3) A copy of any additional documentation that is essential to the SST process.

Please submit these documents to the SST Coordinator.
### SST Process and Initial IEP Professional Development: Questions and Additional Information Needed

What areas do you feel you could use additional information on?

What questions do you have?

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APPENDIX B: Second Professional Development Session PowerPoint and Handout
What Every Educator Needs to Know About Special Education

Information for Staff Members at Riverbank Elementary

• “I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized.”

  - Haim Ginott
Where We Left Off: After Initial Assessment

- We left the process after the SST process, which includes RTI documentation, had ended and/or initial assessment for special education eligibility was initiated.
- Therefore...

What to Do During the Initial IEP Process

- What to do...
  - Allow School Psychologist, Resource Specialist, Speech and Language Pathologist and other service providers to pull the student for testing.
  - Provide input by filling out any questionnaires or forms ASAP and return them promptly.
  - Use people first language.
  - Attend the initial IEP meeting and provide input on the plan for student success.
At the Initial IEP Meeting

- Be prepared to be there at least two hours.
- Be prepared to share positives about the students, including strengths and interests.
- Be prepared to show student work samples and give more information to parents.
- Be prepared to hear the news....either they qualify for special education services or not.

What if a student does not qualify for special education?

- The students either:
  - The student does not receive special education services, but may still continue to need interventions and educators’ support.
  - May qualify for 504 plan.
    - Note: This is a general education function that is mutually exclusive from special education services and handled by our administration.
What if they do Qualify for Special Education Services?

- They will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which is a legal binding document.

- **All educators and staff members must follow the student’s IEP and attend meetings regarding the IEP.** (Note: This is your legal obligation.)

- The student will receive supportive services and accommodations or modifications in the classroom and on assessments based on their individual need.

- **Collaboration continues to be essential element in order to serve the student in an inclusive setting at our school.**

Let’s Review the Qualifying Disabilities Eligible for Special Education Services

- There are 13 qualifying disabilities including:
  - Autism
  - Visual Impairment, including blindness
  - Deafness
  - Deaf-Blindness
  - Hearing Impairment
  - Speech and Language Impairment
  - Specific Learning Disability
  - Orthopedic Impairment
  - Other Health Impairment
  - Intellectual Disability (formerly MR)
  - Emotional Disturbance
  - Traumatic Brain Injury
  - Multiple Disabilities
Please note:

- ADHD is not a qualifying disability.

- Students who are considered to have Conduct Disorder (CD) or have Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) do not qualify for special education services in most cases, unless they have another qualifying disability.

Please note:

- Only a licensed School Psychologist can determine if a child has a learning or emotional disability.

- Only a credentialed Speech and Language Pathologist can determine if a child has a Speech and Language Impairment.

- The other 10 eligible disabling conditions are medical diagnosis.

- This process involves meticulous analysis of the data in accordance with the criteria established by state and federal law.

- This process includes information collected through formal evaluation methods and from information collected from parents, general education teachers, special education teachers, support providers to make this determination.
Please note:

- We use data and the criteria set out by IDEA to make a determination if a student eligible for special education services.

- A parent can accept or deny special education services and is a decisive aspect in the IEP.

- A student who is once determined ineligible for special education services may become eligible at a later date.
  - Attendance, language factors and lacking RTI Interventions are common disqualifying factors.

- A student currently eligible for special education services can be exited from special education services if she/he no longer meets the eligibility requirements.

Let’s assume that the student is determined to be eligible for special education services

- IEP
  - Annual
  - Triennial (Reevaluation)
Most Common Components of an IEP (Elementary Level)

- Information/Eligibility
- Special Factors
- Present Levels
- Goals
- Assessment
- Offer of FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education)
  - Services
  - Educational Setting
- Consent
- Notes

Other Components

- Assessment Plan (initials and triennial only)
- Excusal Form
- Specific Learning Disability Forms A & B (initials and triennial only)
- Behavior Support Plan (if needed)
- Amendment
- Manifestation Determination
Key Components for General Education Teachers

- Information/Eligibility
- Goals
- Assessments
- FAPE: Accommodation and Services
- Behavior Support Plan
- Amendments

***General Education Teachers can access the full IEP by seeing the Case Manager.

Otherwise, an IEP at a Glance gives you most of the information you need.
How are Services and Accommodations and Modifications determined?

- Areas of need(s) determined by assessments and other data are used to determine goals, which determine both accommodations or modifications and services.

Goals

- Progress toward goals are updated every quarter through progress monitoring.

- Parent receive a Progress Monitoring Report each quarter that keeps them informed on the students progress.

- General Education teachers may be asked to provide input on a student's progress towards goals and may be asked to assess goals as well.
Types of services provided

- Specialized Academic Services (RSP)
- Speech Services (SLP)
- Counseling
- Orientation and Mobility Services
- Assistive Technology Services
- Adaptive Physical Education
- Physical Therapy
- Intensive or low incidence services

What else are General Education Teacher and Other Staff Responsible For?

- Providing student with the best instruction possible.

- Assisting in progress monitoring (as needed) and provide assessments to students, including the district benchmark tests.

- Completing the Report Card on a quarterly basis.

- Following the IEP:
  - Allowing services to be delivered.
  - Provide all accommodations.

- Collaborate with the Case Manager and Parents.

- Be sensitive to the student’s needs.
District Benchmarks and Report Cards

- District Benchmark Assessments:
  - Provides data-compared to the grade level state standards.
    - Let students review in the general education class.

- Report Cards:
  - Special Education: Progress Monitoring on IEP Goals
  - General Education: Report Card
    - Based on grade level state standards
    - Report where the student falls compared to the grade level state standards.
    - Report that student is working toward individualized goals and receives accommodations (if necessary).

The Concept

- General Education Teachers and Special Education Teachers are like co-parents (co-teachers).

  *We must continually share and collaborate as they are OUR students!*
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Inclusion

- From the language and term “Least Restrictive Environment” (IDEA), the federal mandate to educate children with disabilities with their non-disabled peers came Inclusion.

Inclusive Educational Settings

- Bringing services and supports to the students in the general education classroom, as opposed to removing students from leaning experiences with same age peers, is largely viewed as the hallmark of inclusion.

- While inclusive practices are supported largely by legislative initiatives found in IDEA and NCLB, including students with disabilities in the general education classroom allows for many positive social and academic outcomes for all students.
Inclusive Educational Settings Depend on Collaboration

- Friend & Cook (2010) define collaboration as a “style of interaction” that cannot exist in isolation and “can occur only when it is used by people who are engaged in a specific process, task, or activity.”

- Defining characteristics of collaboration include:
  - the process is voluntary
  - requires cooperation among participants to meet shared goals that includes sharing responsibility, resources, participation, decision making, and accountability for outcomes

- This practice is essential to inclusion and is a direct expectation of IDEA.

When should I interact with a student’s case manager?

- All the time and especially if you need help reaching this student!

- Specifically, case managers should be notified if there is a:
  - Changes in academic ability
  - Change in behavior
  - Change in academic performance
  - Change or development in social interactions that is concerning or particularly positive
  - Concerning parental interactions

- Use all means available:
  - Email
  - In Person (informal/formal)
  - Call
So, what should I do in the classroom to ensure an inclusive setting?

- Include the student in all academic and social activities that every other student is provided.
- Give extra help to the student and make the student feel safe emotionally. Be sensitive to their needs. Don't single them out or allow others' to bully them!
- Be part of their support team. Provide extra help as needed.
- Provide the accommodations and modifications that are in the IEP.
- Allow the student to receive the services and assessment when needed.
- Collaborate with the students' case manager (RSPTeacher or SLP) and service providers to get support and share growth and areas of concern.

So what is the special education teacher responsible for?

- Informing all teachers about what key components are in the student's IEP.
- Act as a resource for collaboration and materials that can support the student in all inclusive educational settings.
- Plan, prepare and conduct initial, annual or triennial IEPs, addendum meetings, and manifestation determination proceedings.
- Ensure that the student is receiving the services and accommodations provided in their IEP. Inform administering if this is not occurring.
• Conduct Progress Monitoring on IEP goals and ongoing and/or triennial assessments.

• Conduct Statewide (CST) assessments in small group settings.

• Provide specialized academic instruction to student on their caseload with the support of their paraeducators on a push in or pull out model.

• And much more!

IEP Meetings
• Annual IEP: Occurs each year within a year of the last IEP date. (i.e. this IEP date is 12/12/2012, then the next years IEP must be held on or before 12/12/2013)
• Triennial IEP: Every three years a complete assessment (similar to the initial assessment) to determine if the child still qualifies for Special Education services.
• 30 day IEPs: New student from outside district or within district.
Other IEP Related Meetings

- Addendums: Additions to the current IEP after it has been affirmed. These additions, however large or small, become part of the current IEP.
- Manifestation Determination: When a student is in danger of expulsion it must be determined if the behavior or action is a manifestation of their disability. If it is not, normal consequences apply.

General Educators responsibility in IEP or Related Meetings

- General education teachers are required to attend IEPs per Educational Code and IDEA.
  - Invites are sent through Outlook. Click accept, decline, or tentative.

- If you are unable to attend, provide written input and work samples at least 1 day before the IEP.

- **Note: A parent can request that all teachers be present and per the law we all have to be there.
• Share your concerns with the Case Manager in advance of the meeting.

• Allow for the meeting to flow and focus on student success.

Current Caseload

• RSP: 35 and counting
• SDC (Richards): 16
• SH (Watson & Parks): 23
• SLP (Speech only): 23

• Current Total: 97 students
Notes about Special Education Services at Riverbank

- Moved to a 4 days a week schedule held Monday through Thursday, except 6-8 grade levels.

- Friday is designed for assessments and preparation, but 2 periods are still taught on these days.

- No RSP groups on minimum days, but 2 periods are still taught on these days.

- Specialized Academic Instructional Minutes are consistently overserved to account for these changes (no Friday groups and no groups on minimum days).

- IEPs are scheduled taking into account parent requests of date and time and the availability of key staff members (i.e. LEA, Administration, School Psychologist, Service providers).

- All effort is made to pick the best time for all, however, it is impossible to please everyone's schedules. Sorry about that. 😊
Conclusion

- Check out Slip: List other topics or information that you would like to have more information on.

References


What Every Educator Should Know About Special Education

My questions are....

I would like more information about....

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