



# T/TAC Bulletin

The Training and Technical Assistance Centers at Virginia Tech and Radford University

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## Informal assessment in the elementary classroom

By Lynn Graves

In elementary classrooms, assessment is predominantly informal. To assess or not to assess is not the question, especially as the demands for accountability in public education increases. Teachers may not be aware that they are assessing children as they participate in classroom discussions, daily observations, and one-on-one conversations. If assessment is authentic, ongoing, and integrated with classroom instruction then it is easy to see that it can take on many different forms.

### Prior knowledge

The first step in informal assessment should be collecting and discussing prior knowledge. This is vital information in an elementary classroom where each child's experiences are vastly diverse. A key area of this assessment is identifying what children know *before* beginning a new unit of study. To assess students' prior knowledge:

- Teachers can lead students in generating ideas about a specific topic on a traditional KWL chart. "K" representing "What I Know", "W" for "What I Want to Know," and "L" for "What I Learned."
- Write morning letters to the students (e.g. greeting students and explaining what will take place today such as music or a special visitor) introducing the new topic. Ask the student to write or illustrate what s/he

already knows about the new topic. This activity will be insightful and will give each child a chance to show you what s/he knows.

- Use classroom discussions to elicit prior knowledge.
- Facilitate partner or small group discussions.

### Rubrics

Rubrics are effective tools of assessment in determining the quality of work expected and evaluating completed work. They allow students and parents to see beforehand what the expectations will be. Students can assist in writing rubrics by generating ideas and setting up criteria for a given project or assignment.

### Informal observations

Informal observations are drawn from typical classroom interactions. Teachers, especially in the primary grades, will find anecdotal notes useful for these types of interactions. The purpose of anecdotal notes is to show growth in literacy in the classroom. In a more literature-based classroom, these notes can be documented proof of student progress for a parent conference. Anecdotal notes provide the teacher with wonderful insight into a student's thinking, language, and interests. Below are some possible ways to obtain anecdotal notes.

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- Use a clipboard with a different color index card for each student on which you can take notes.
- Use self-adhesive file labels to take notes and transfer to student specific files later.
- List skills or objectives, with a column for each child and a brief comments section so that check off is quick and easy.
- Focus on “real” classroom situations to capture language and interest information.

### Student responses

It is as important to use a variety of types of assessment as it is essential to use a variety of teaching strategies. Written work may be difficult for some students, even though they may grasp new concepts and skills with ease. Allowing students to respond with a group or individual project will result in more enthusiastic and motivated learners. Students can show what has been learned by making an oral presentation, creating and performing a play, or designing a pamphlet or brochure. Following is a list of other activities for student response:

- Create a diorama, slide show, game, replica, poster or scrapbook.
- Write a report, news article, diary, song, or rap.
- Orally debate, defend, or criticize.
- Invent something.
- Compose a commercial, news report, advertisement, picture/photo essay, or slide show.

### Portfolios

To tie instruction and assessment together portfolios are the most effective means of informal assessment. Portfolios allow students to become active members of the overall assessment process. Teachers, students, and parents are able to witness student growth and

compare work to previous work more easily. Portfolios are invaluable in communicating student progress at parent conferences or at any time throughout the year. Some ideas for portfolios are:

- Ask parents to supply a 3-ring binder and sheet protectors (approximately 100) at the beginning of the year.
- Ask for donations for film or film developing so that pictures can be added to portfolios.
- Set aside a time during each grading period for students to choose work to go into the portfolio.
- Allow students easy access to portfolios so that work can be added.
- Ask students to comment on why a piece was added to portfolio (can be dictated by teacher in early grades).
- Celebrate the end of year with a “Picnic Portfolio Party.” Invite families to bring dinner, a blanket, or chairs and spread portfolios out on the playground, cafeteria tables, gymnasium floor, or park benches so that they can be shown and celebrated.

Informal assessment takes place every day in a classroom. The most beneficial kind of assessment should be authentic, integrated, and ongoing. Building on prior knowledge is essential to planning an exciting, meaningful, and connected curriculum. Students should “live” what they are learning. There should be strong evidence inside and outside a classroom of what learning is taking place. All of these elements combined with various types of informal assessment will result in balanced assessment and successful learning for each child, leaving no child behind.



## Welcome Lynn!

Lynn Graves, Elementary Project Coordinator, is the newest member to the T/TAC at Radford University. Lynn comes to T/TAC from Montgomery County Public Schools where she was an elementary classroom teacher, primarily teaching in first and second grades.

She received undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville with area of concentrations in early childhood and curriculum and instruction.

In her role as Elementary Project Coordinator, Lynn will work with Instructional Support Teams (IST) and elementary long-term technical assistance (LTTA) sites.

## VCLD announces

### *Leave No Teacher Behind*

March 8, 2003

On the historic campus of VCU in Richmond, VA .

Harvey Perkins will present “Work is Not a Four Letter Word.” Gather your colleagues and administrators and plan on attending a motivational as well as informative conference this spring!

### **For more information:**

Information on the Conference, mini-grant opportunities, and Teacher of the Year applications can be found at: [www.vclid.org](http://www.vclid.org)

# Are they with me? Ongoing assessment techniques will let you know

by Barbara Flanagan

Assessment means different things to many people and for that reason it may be important to revisit one particular aspect of assessment that some of us may have forgotten. Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the teaching cycle and guides us in determining our "next steps" for instruction. Ongoing assessment gives us insight into our students' understanding and into the success or lack of success of our teaching practices. Both kinds of information are critical as we work to expand students' understanding.

Ongoing assessment of understanding can lead to improved student test scores and less time spent in reteaching concepts. Two secondary, but important, benefits are that students may gain confidence in their ability to learn and become more motivated because they are experiencing success. The following techniques are quick, but effective. Try them to determine if your students are "with you"!

## Questions

Questioning allows the teacher to informally assess student progress and actively engage learners.

- Process and product questions help the teacher to gauge student comprehension. ("What is the answer?" versus "How did you get the answer?")
- Extend your wait time when asking questions, don't fill the silence, and let students mull the question for 10-15 seconds.
- Ask higher level questions and make sure there is an equitable distribution of questions among students.

## Informal member checks

It may be difficult to determine

if students understand material during small or whole group instruction. Intermittently during a lesson, conduct informal member checks to monitor comprehension. Have students hold up cards with symbols/words that corresponds with their understanding when you ask questions. For example:

- Red, yellow, green light- "I don't understand", "I'm confused", "I understand."
- "Click" (I understand) or "clunk" (I don't understand).

## Summaries

Frequently asking students to summarize main points can help teachers assess student comprehension and allows all students chances to hear a review of major points.

Ask the students to restate directions in their own words; this allows both the teacher and student(s) to feel that they are ready to move on with the lesson.

## Risk reminders

As you introduce a complex new concept or complicated new skill, remind students that learning is challenging and that students who take risks to ask questions and ask for help are more likely to learn.

## Lesson reaction sheets

At the end of the lesson, students write a brief reaction to what they learned, what was confusing, and what else they would like to learn about the topic.

## Think-Pair-Share

Students think individually about a topic for two minutes. Then students pair up to discuss the topic. Then the pairs share their responses with the entire group.

## Collaborative tests

After a lesson, divide the students into small cooperative learning groups. Allow the students time to discuss the lesson and summarize the key points, revise their notes, and add additional information from their classmates. Then give students questions to answer as a group about the lesson. This technique "fills in the gaps" for students who need the support from others and the extra time to learn concepts, and it gives all students a chance to interact with the material.

## Guided lecture

The teacher presents the objectives of the lesson, then presents the lesson and the students listen. No notes are taken during the lesson; note taking begins after the lesson is over. Students are instructed to write what they recall within 5 minutes. In small cooperative groups the students identify main ideas, put them in order, and draw appropriate conclusions. The teacher circulates to monitor and answer questions. Students then reflect individually by writing (without their notes) key ideas presented in the lesson.

## Fake pop quiz

This gives students a chance to review information before a quiz or test. It can be open-book or closed-book; individual or with pairs or small groups. It's brief (2 to 5 questions) and it doesn't affect a student's grade. Students score their own work and get immediate feedback. It's also unexpected.

## Reference

Schumm, Jeanne S., Vaughn, Sharon, & Sobel, Michelle C. (1997). Are they getting it? How to monitor student understanding in inclusive classrooms. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 3, 168-171.

# Performance assessment in early childhood education: The work sampling system

adapted from ERIC Digest ED382407

The pressure to demonstrate effectiveness through children's performance on standardized tests not only changes how teachers teach and what children study, but also seems to be changing our very understanding of the nature of learning and achievement (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1993).

Group-administered tests focus on the acquisition of simple facts, low-level skills, superficial memorization, and isolated evidence of achievement. The tests hold great power, and that power can be abused. Of greatest concern is that they rob teachers of their sense of judgment about how to help children develop to their optimal potential.

This loss of judgment is often observed in the use of readiness and early school achievement tests. The appropriateness of using standardized, group-administered achievement tests for children below third grade is highly dubious and questionable. The content of these tests is generally abstract, verbally mediated, and potentially biased against children unfamiliar or uncomfortable with test-like activities and with middle class manners and mores (Stallman & Pearson, 1990). Even more problematic is how little can be learned from the results of standardized tests administered to young children; the data may tell us a child's percentile ranking on a subtest, but they cannot tell us whether the child's performance reflects an inability to follow the complex test directions or whether the child did not have mastery of the information or skill.

Performance assessment offers a new approach that documents activities in which children engage on a daily basis. It is flexible enough to reflect individual

academic achievement and designed to evaluate many elements of learning and development not captured by standardized tests. It puts assessment back where it belongs: in the hands of teachers and children, and in the classrooms in which they work (Meisels, Dorfman, & Steele, 1995).

## Work sampling system

The *Work Sampling System* (Meisels, Jablon, et al., 1995) offers an exemplar of how performance assessment works in Head Start, early childhood, and the primary years. This performance assessment system assesses and documents children's skills, knowledge, behavior, and accomplishments as displayed across a wide variety of education domains and as manifested on multiple occasions. Work sampling is a curriculum-embedded assessment, rather than an "on demand" set of tests. It consists of three complementary components: (1) developmental guidelines and checklists, (2) portfolios, and (3) summary reports.

## Developmental guidelines and checklists

The developmental guidelines and checklists are designed to assist teachers in observing and documenting individual children's growth and progress. They are intended to reflect common activities and expectations in classrooms that are structured around developmentally appropriate activities and are based on national, state, and local curriculum standards. Teachers should be able to complete the Checklists without testing their children. Each checklist covers seven domains: (1) Personal and social development; (2) Language and literacy; (3) Mathematical thinking; (4) Scientific thinking; (5) Social studies; (6) The Arts; and (7) Physical

development.

## Portfolios

Purposeful collections of children's work that illustrate their efforts, progress, and achievements, portfolios are used in *The Work Sampling System* to provide rich documentation of each child's experiences throughout the year. Portfolio collection enables children to become involved with the process of selecting and judging their own work. Portfolio content should parallel classroom activities and lead to the development of new activities based on joint teacher-child assessment of the child's progress and interests.

## Summary reports

The Summary Report, completed three times a year for each child, is a means of translating the rich information from developmental checklists and portfolios into a more easily understood and interpreted document for parents, teachers, and administrators. Summary reports are designed to replace report cards. They consist of performance and progress ratings in each domain, and teachers' reflections and comments about the child's development, based on the evidence accumulated in the Checklists and Portfolios.

## Conclusion

Tests are powerful only if we attach high stakes to them and relinquish our judgment about how to educate children (Meisels, 1992). Some tests are less informative than others, and some are hopelessly biased, narrow, or unrealistic; but any test can be misused, just as any idea can be distorted.

Work Sampling is a powerful substitute for group-administered achievement tests. Research about *The Work Sampling System*

shows that it provides teachers with reliable and valid data about children's school performance (Meisels, Liaw, Dorfman, & Fails, in press) and with a great deal of information and evidence about children's activities and development that can be used to enhance instruction and to report to children's parents. When children's experience is rich and diverse, invites them to display their initiative, and engages their curiosity, then performance assessment promises to help us learn about children as we watch them learn about their world.

### Reference:

Adapted from: Meisels, Samuel J. (1993). Remaking Classroom Assessment with The Work Sampling System. *YOUNG CHILDREN* 48 (5, July): 34-40. EJ 465 921.

## Share the Joy Success in Schools for All!

### Mark your calendar!

June 16-18, 2003  
Radford, VA

**Dan Hobbs** will share his experiences of working with students with complex disabilities (who exhibit challenging behaviors) so they can participate and show progress in positive educational experiences and meaningful life activities.

**Susan Ohanian** will describe how she built relationships with students in inner-city schools and learned how powerful meaningful, individualized curriculum can be in helping all students succeed in school.

**Fabulous and fun childcare** will be provided, free of charge, on campus for families with children with disabilities and their siblings.

## Before you "throw in the towel": IEP & SOL questions to ponder

by Barbara Flanagan

Questions are often asked regarding the likelihood of students with IEPs passing SOL assessments. Let's be sure that we do not "throw in the towel" regarding our belief that students with IEPs can pass their SOL assessments. Instead, let's take a careful look at our own classroom and IEP practices to determine if there are steps that we can take to strengthen the link between students' success with their IEP goals and the state SOL assessment.

### Ask yourself:

Does the student's IEP focus on skills that s/he needs in order to access and progress in the general curriculum (i.e. literacy skills, learning strategies, social skills, and/or transition needs)?

Are individually tailored accommodations taught and offered year round to the student, as well as on the assessments?

Are the child's IEP goals addressed through the curriculum that covers the SOL for that grade?

Is the student progressing toward his/her IEP goals throughout the year and from year to year?

If the student is not making progress towards his/her IEP goals, why not? Do IEP goals need to be changed? Do instructional methods and/or materials need to be altered? (This is a question that I don't believe we look at carefully but holds the potential for a lot of student growth in some cases.) Has the student's goals for the IEP been appropriately prioritized?

Do teachers take advantage of all the SOL resources on the Virginia DOE website?

Do teachers analyze students' SOL assessment results to determine individual student's weaknesses and note any trends among their students that they could address during instruction?

Do teachers have the knowledge, skills, and ability to teach students based on research-based methods?

Does the student have adequate "test-taking" skills or do they need instruction in how to take standardized tests?

Do students get opportunities for SOL-type assessments throughout the school year?

Is the student performing his/her best on the assessment; are they taking it seriously?

If you answered "no" to any of the above questions then you may need to consider changing your instructional methods, materials, or the student's IEP goals in order to see student progress. In other words, before you "throw in the towel" and give up on students' ability to succeed in SOL assessments, make sure you are exploring all the above factors that can contribute to student success.

The IEP and your instruction hold the potential for significant student growth and progress in the general curriculum and therefore on the SOL assessments.

*Only when Helen Keller had a means to communicate did she come to escape the pronouncement of being retarded.*

(Blatt, 1999 as cited in Taylor & Blatt, 1999, p. 79)

## Bits and bytes: Assessment by Glenna Gustafson

"All levels of student achievement should be considered the floor, not the ceiling." Eric Jensen, 2002.

**The Use of Tests as Part of High-Stakes Decision-Making for Students: A Resource Guide for Educators and Policy-Makers** (2000) describes standards for tests that are used for diagnostic and intervention purposes, assessment of academic educational achievement, and alternate assessments for students with disabilities. <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/testing/index.html>

**Parent Guide to Special Education Evaluation, PACER**, (1999) explains the basics of the initial evaluation process used in conjunction with eligibility for special education services. [http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/special\\_education/parent\\_guide\\_evaluation.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/special_education/parent_guide_evaluation.html)

**Assessment of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students for Special Education** <http://www.teachersfirst.com/sped/prof/assess/divers-assess.html>

**Portfolios as Assessment Tools** is the article to read if you would like to learn more about creating portfolios. <http://www.teachersfirst.com/sped/prof/assess/portfolios.html>

**MindPlay Educational Software and Free Online Reading Assessments** offers phonics-based reading software and free online phonics and reading comprehension assessments for K-Adult learners. <http://www.mindplay.com/free.html>

**ExploraSource** is a free online tool that makes it easy to find instructional resources that meet learning needs. It identifies national, state and local educational standards and has information on a range of assessment topics <http://www.bigchalk.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/WOPortal.woa/db/Home.html>

**Activity Tree** covers a wide variety of online topics with quizzes already developed. <http://www.activitytree.com/library/index.shtml>

**Quia** allows you to create online quizzes, games, puzzles, and surveys for students <http://www.quia.com/>

### What's New at T/TAC?

If you missed our Open House, here are some of the new devices we showcased.

**NaturalPoint TrackIR** is an ergonomic device that provides precise cursor control through simple head movement allowing your hands to remain on the keyboard, or at your side. PC only <http://www.naturalpoint.com/>

**Quick Pad Pro** is a simple, durable, word processor. It operates on four AA batteries for up to 400 hours, and can hold up to 250 individually named files in ten separate folders. For Mac and PC <http://www.quickpad.com>

**Alphasmart 3000** with Co:Writer and Inspiration Applets allows you to enter and edit text, then send it to any computer for formatting or directly to a printer. For Mac and PC <http://www.alphasmart.com>

**Leap Pad Learning System**® and interactive books deliver activities that develop vocabulary, spelling, and phonics awareness. <http://www.leapfrog.com>

**DynaWrite** is a keyboard-based augmentative communication device which allows anyone with the ability to type and spell to express themselves quickly and easily. <http://www.dynavoxsys.com/>

**The Optimist** is a hand-held tablet-size, personal pen com-

puter that can be used as a powerful augmentative/alternative communication (AAC) aid <http://www.zygo-usa.com/>

### Mark Your Calendars!

June 26-27, 2003 T/TAC Technology Conference: *AT and Aug Com, Making the Connections*, at the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. This year we will have a full 2 day event. You could win a free conference registration by attending other T/TAC events throughout the year.

### Correction

On the flier of all our Regional T/TAC workshops that was in your schools early in October, our web address was incorrect. Please note there is no "www" in our web address. The correct address is <http://tac.elps.vt.edu>.

## Welcome Lisa!

Lisa Holland joined the Radford University T/TAC staff this year as a secondary project coordinator. After earning her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Radford, Lisa worked for Montgomery County Public Schools. Last year, Lisa worked with the RU T/TAC through a Teacher-In-Residence Program.

Lisa primarily works with Long Term Technical Assistance Teams (LTTA) in secondary settings. Her areas of special interest include: secondary inclusion, positive behavioral supports, and transition.

## Testing the "untestable"

by Gillian Rai

The prospect of developing an effective IEP can be an overwhelming task. Now imagine how much more overwhelmed you feel when you read a student's evaluative report and it is filled with words like "unresponsive", "refused", "behavior interfered with testing" or, "distractible." Sometimes we read such statements, but know "deep down" that the student is capable of much more, if only we had a way to "pull it out."

Could there be something powerful influencing the student's completion of the assessment? If so the evaluative report could be wrong. Perhaps the problem is the testing situation. The following is an example of techniques used while testing Anna, a twelve year old diagnosed with autism.

Anna was reported to have a severe expressive and receptive language disorder. On measures of general intelligence she was reported as having moderate to profound retardation. Some of Anna's team members reported that Anna's behaviors were interfering with her performance. They suspected that Anna was capable of much more than her test scores revealed.

The team contacted a psychological examiner, known for her success in testing "difficult" children. After obtaining a brief history, the examiner determined that an occupational therapist (OT) should be present during testing.

The OT's observations suggested that Anna had an overly aroused nervous system. Anna appeared restless. She exhibited unwarranted nonsensical talking, giggling, and hysterical laughing. The OT noted jumping, and extreme side-to-side head movement. She was not able to sit in a chair or attend to any of the examiner's test materials. School personnel

reported that these behaviors were common.

The examiner sat at a table while Anna stood several feet away. While the examiner talked to Anna, the OT gave several repetitions of firm, but gentle, pressure down the entire length of her back. This was followed by gentle but firm pressure down through her shoulders and then firm compression of her shoulders, towards her midline. Anna did not resist any of this deep pressure input. The restless movement, excessive talking, and giggling ceased for a few seconds. These behaviors gradually began again, but before they escalated, the OT administered another "dose" of firm pressure touch. The side-to-side movements Anna made with her head continued throughout the deep pressure input.

Since a suspended swing was not available, Anna was placed on a therapy ball and gently bounced. The bouncing was alternated with side to side and back and forth movement. Although the ball was not a substitute for the powerful input that a swing could provide, it was enough to stop the side-to-side movement of her head so Anna focused on the materials presented by the examiner.

Within 15 minutes Anna was seated at the table with the examiner. When the head movements were observed, Anna was asked to sit on the therapy ball. Anna bounced and rocked herself for a short time and then moved back to her previous position across the table from the examiner. She did not need to use the therapy ball again. For the remainder of the session, the OT sat behind Anna and provided the calming input of deep pressure as needed. These very simple yet powerful strategies made it possible for Anna to work with the examiner for 90 minutes!

Simple yet powerful sensory strategies such as slowly bouncing on a ball, deep pressure massage, and joint compression, made a significant difference in Anna's ability to participate in the testing situation. The examiner rejected the labels "untestable" and "unresponsive". Anna completed a receptive communication test and two cognitive measures. Anna obtained scores in the low average to moderate mental retardation range. Compared to her previous testing, which indicated that she was in the moderate to profound mental retardation range, these scores are more accurate measures of Anna's abilities.

Like many other children and adults, Anna's behaviors are cues that her ability to process sensory information is disordered. Anna's overly aroused system was calmed and organized so that she was ready to generate meaningful responses during the psychological evaluation.

Preparing a child's system through this approach is incredibly powerful. We can free all students from an uncomfortable and often painful experience. In doing this we can help prepare their nervous systems so that they can better participate and learn in both their home and school environment.

### Reference

Baker, S. (2000). Testing the untestable. *The Ready Reader* v. 1. n. 1 January-February.

*Not being able to speak is not the same as not having anything to say...*

**Rosemary Crossley**

## VT T/TAC workshops

Workshops are held at the Higher Ed Centers in Abingdon or Roanoke

### VAAP Q & A Sessions

Jan. 13, 2003, Blacksburg, 3:00-5:00  
Jan. 16, 2003, Abingdon, 3:00-5:00

If you are supporting students through the alternate assessment process this year bring your COE and questions; Diann and Leslie will (try to) bring answers.

### Move Over, We're Coming In! Rethinking Service Delivery for SLP's, OT's and PT's

Feb. 14, 2003 Roanoke 9:00-4:00  
**Presenters:** Lora Kingma, SLP and Gillian Rai, OTR

The goal of this workshop is to assist school-based clinicians (SLP, OT, PT) in proactively creating classroom-based therapy programs. By addressing therapy goals throughout the whole school (as opposed to only in therapy rooms) therapists will create a common vocabulary with other school staff as well as develop a school-wide emphasis on therapy goals and their effects on academic, behavioral and social success.

**Who should attend:** School based SLP, OT, COTA, PT, and PTA.

### Counting on Early Transitions

Feb. 18, 2003 Roanoke 9:00-3:00  
**Presenters:** Katy McCullough and Selina Flores

Come learn the nuts and bolts of transition between Part C (early intervention) and Part B (special education). We'll discuss requirements, timelines, and strategies for facilitating smooth transitions for children and families in Virginia.

**Who should attend:** Early intervention providers, service coordinators, early childhood teachers, and parents.

### Everything's a Dollar

March 6, 2003 Abingdon 9:00-3:00  
**Presenters:** Selina Flores and Glenna Gustafson

Come to this fast paced hands-on workshop and learn how to take those inexpensive dollar store finds and turn them into versatile assistive technologies. You will not leave this workshop empty handed!

### The Keys to IEP Planning and Writing

Feb. 28, 2003 Roanoke 9:00-3:00  
**Presenters:** Barbara Flanagan and Leslie Daniel

Student-centered planning is the "engine" that drives the IEP process. Participants learn best practice for planning and writing individualized educational programs that are educationally useful.

Topics addressed are: developing a useful present level of performance, developing annual goals and short term objectives or benchmarks, planning for modifications and accommodations, and including parents as partners in the IEP process.

**Who should attend:** members of IEP teams.

### Write Proficiently

March 14, 2003 Roanoke 8:30-3:30  
**Presenter:** Helen Barrier

Learn a strategy for recognizing and writing 14 sentence patterns within four types of sentences: simple, compound, complex and compound-complex. This strategy consists of 2 manuals: The instructor's manual and the student lesson manual set-up to be duplicated for lessons for students.

**Who should attend:** This is applicable to the 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. Cost \$40.00

### Teaching Students with Asperger Syndrome: Ideas that Work

March 21, 2003 Salem 9:00-4:00  
**Organizer:** Leslie Daniel

Participants will learn the definition of AS based on the DSM-IV and general strategies to meet the needs of these students. Learn how to develop and teach with social stories, social review, and comic strip conversations. Participants will develop resources for their students based on these strategies.

**Who should attend:** members of IEP teams who support students with Asperger syndrome who have social skill concerns.

### Seeing the Possibilities: A Consultative Model of Early Intervention Services

March 28, 2003 Roanoke 9:00-3:00  
**Presenters:** Kristen Birkmeier, PT and Debbie Kapsalakis, SLP

Learn effective strategies of collaboration and consultation, as a therapist in the Part C (early intervention) system. Our NDT certified trainers offer successful techniques and strategies in delivering a consultative model of early intervention services. Learn what outcomes lend themselves to the consultative model of service. Gain practical knowledge from hands-on demonstrations of positioning and facilitative techniques to help a child during instructional sessions.

**Who should attend:** Early intervention service providers, OT, PT, SLP, and program administrators.

**In case of questionable weather: please call (800) 848-2714 (or 231-5167) at any time for information regarding cancellation and rescheduling.**

### Through the Eyes of a Child: Combining Sensory Integration with Floortime

April 11, 2003 Roanoke 9:00-3:00  
**Presenters:** Selina Flores and Gillian Rai

This workshop focuses on combining the principles of Sensory Integration with the D.I.R. Floortime model (Developmental, Individual-Difference, Relationship Based Treatment) to determine what children are communicating to us and why. Generate ideas and develop strategies to help children be more successful in their daily activities at home and at school.

**Who should attend:** Early intervention providers, service coordinators, early childhood teachers, and parents.

### Power of Collaboration!

April 11, 2003 Abingdon 8:30-3:30  
**Presenter:** Helen Barrier

Are you in a co-teaching situation, planning to be in one next year, or an administrator setting up collaborative partnerships? Learn about an incredible resource available to collaborative teams based on the research at The University of Kansas *Power of 2* website: [www.powerof2.org](http://www.powerof2.org).

**Participants** are urged to attend in collaborative teams to access information for assistance in planning, modifying and accommodating instruction as well as implementing strategies for ALL learners in the general education classroom. No experience necessary!

### Mail payment and registration to:

T/TAC Workshop Registration  
 112 Lane Hall Mail Code 0254  
 Blacksburg, VA 24061  
 (800) 848-2714 or (540) 231-5167  
 Fax: (540) 231-5672

## T/TAC registration form: copy as needed

### Check the workshops for which you are registering:

- VAAP Q & A Session, Blacksburg (free)
  - VAAP Q & A Session, Abingdon (free)
  - Move over, We're Coming In: (\$15)
  - Counting on Early Transitions (\$15)
  - The Keys to IEP Planning and Writing (\$15)
  - Everything's a Dollar (\$15)
  - Write Proficiently (\$40)
  - Teaching Students with Asperger Syndrome: Ideas that Work (\$15)
  - Seeing the Possibilities: A Consultative Model (\$15)
  - Through the Eyes of a Child: Combining SI and Floortime (\$15)
  - Power of Collaboration (\$15)
- See the Fall 2002 T/TAC Bulletin or our webpage for descriptions of the following workshops:**
- Instant Recall, Abingdon (\$35)
  - Instant Recall, Roanoke (\$35)
  - The Brain & Emotional Literacy 101, Roanoke (\$15)
  - The Brain & Emotional Literacy 101, Abingdon (\$15)
  - Teaching with a Different Brain in Mind 101, Roanoke (\$15)
  - Teaching with a Different Brain in Mind 101, Abingdon (\$15)

**Please print or type**—complete a separate form for each participant.  
**Please provide a complete address to which we can send confirmation**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position/Title \_\_\_\_\_  
 School/Center/Site \_\_\_\_\_ School Division \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Daytime phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Method of payment:

Check or PO (FID number must be included) payable to: **Treasurer, Virginia Tech** (No cash or credit cards please). Instructional assistants may attend T/TAC workshops free of charge.

(\$ amount due) \_\_\_\_\_ (please include fee for *each* workshop selected). Enclosed:

- Purchase Order # \_\_\_\_\_  Check or PO to follow
- Check # \_\_\_\_\_  No charge: paraprofessional

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If you are a person with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services, or other accommodations for this conference, please discuss your needs at (540) 231-6248, (800) 848-2714 or TDD (540) 231-3315 at your earliest convenience.

## Least dangerous assumption

by Leslie Daniel and Diann Eaton

For students with complex or multiple disabilities which impair their ability to communicate, avoid IQ testing if you can. Be creative; use assessments that do not require a verbal response, ecological assessments, and/or observations. Assessment strategies must be extremely sensitive to determine the strengths of students with complex disabilities. Without an accurate and reliable means of communication a person cannot persuade us of what they know or understand.

A student's performance changes when appropriate supports are provided; the student may have unexpected abilities that remain untapped until research, technology, and our own knowledge and skills advance.

We tend to base a student's intervention strategies and expectations on their perceived communication and "intelligence," therefore our assessments must be as accurate as possible. Tested IQ tells us little that can help us design appropriate educational supports so students can access and show progress in the general curriculum.

Often the only thing we can truly garner from an IQ test on a student with multiple disabilities is that s/he lacked the communication skills to demonstrate knowledge. This is powerful information—it tells the educational team that more must be done to see that the student learns communication skills, but it does not tell us anything about their potential for learning.

The least dangerous assumption to make is to presume capability. In other words assume the student knows what any child of a similar age would know, until s/he can tell you otherwise. Teach using rich and varied instructional activities and materials. Encourage participation from all students.

Sometimes we must "take it on faith" that our students are learning. This is difficult for teachers to do; we rely on feedback from students so that we know our instruction is making a difference. However, some students haven't achieved that level of communication yet. That doesn't mean they haven't learned, it just means they can't tell you what they know.

## PREP project of Virginia

presents:

*Working with Infants and Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing* (Beginning Level)

**Dates and Locations:**

Blackstone, Dec. 11, VA Tech  
Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research Extension Center

Fredericksburg, Feb. 12, Holiday Inn Select

**Sponsored by:**

Partnership for People with Disabilities, VCU

**Contact:**

Laura Robertson, Partnership for People with Disabilities  
(804) 827 - 0196  
lroberts@mail1.vcu.edu

**For more information,** go to [www.vcu.edu/partnership](http://www.vcu.edu/partnership)

Information on our three-day, intermediate level training is coming winter, 2003!

## The power of believing

(An oath for professionals who work with students with severe disabilities)

- Believe that all students can and have the right to learn.
- Believe that all students can and have the right to communicate.
- Believe that all students have the right to choose and should be given opportunities to do so.
- Believe that there is always hope.
- Believe that small miracles are the best.
- Believe that all movements, signals, cries and gestures are a form of communication.
- Believe in patience.
- Believe each individual has something positive and valuable to share with you.
- Believe that if there is a will there is a way.
- Believe that you have something positive to give to individuals with severe and multiple disabilities.
- Believe that all students need to be cognitively challenged.
- Believe that if you believe the child will believe.

### Reference

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## Mary Baldwin announcement

Mary Baldwin College announces that the Masters of Arts in Teaching Program is now approved to offer initial licensure for teaching students with Learning Disabilities, Emotional Disturbance, Mental Retardation, and an add-on endorsement in Gifted Education. All of these endorsements are for grades K-12 and offer new options for those wishing to teach exceptional students in the schools. Further, this extends our traditional MAT program from the PK-6 Elementary, or 6-8 Middle Grades endorsement areas into the secondary school settings. Classes are offered in Staunton, Charlottesville, Richmond and Roanoke.

*Staunton:* MAT Main Office  
Edmondson House, 221 North  
Market Street, Staunton, VA 24401  
phone: 540-887-733  
fax: (540) 887-7303

*Charlottesville:*  
MBC/PVCC Cooperative Program  
501 College Drive Charlottesville,  
VA 22902  
phone: (434) 961-5422  
fax: (434) 971-8232

*Richmond:*  
MBC Richmond Regional Center,  
1801 Libbie Avenue Richmond, VA  
23226  
phone: (804) 282-9111  
fax: (804) 282-9138

*Roanoke:*  
108 North Jefferson Street Suite  
816 Roanoke, VA 24016  
phone: (540) 343-7206  
fax: (540) 342-5419

For additional information, be sure to check our website, [www.mbc.edu](http://www.mbc.edu), frequently for updates. Should you have questions concerning the MAT program, please do not hesitate to contact the MAT office toll free at 1-866-849-0676 or by email at [mat@mbc.edu](mailto:mat@mbc.edu).

## T/TAC staff directory

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**Training and Technical Assistance Center**  
**VPI & SU**  
**112 Lane Hall**  
**Mail Stop 0254**  
**Blacksburg, VA 24061**

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The mission of Virginia's Training and Technical Assistance Centers is to improve educational opportunities and contribute to the success of children and youth with disabilities (birth–22 years) and children who have disadvantages or are at-risk for school failure (birth–9 years). The Centers provide quality training and technical assistance in response to local, regional, and state needs. T/TAC services increase the capacity of schools, school personnel, service providers, and families to meet the needs of children and youth.

## T/TAC Services

- on-site consultation
- T/TAC-based consultation
- telephone consultation
- team planning
- library loans
- assistive technology loans
- information searches
- regional workshops
- long range planning
- transition services
- referral services
- linking & networking resources

## School Divisions Served

### Region 6

- Alleghany
- Botetourt
- Covington
- Craig
- Danville
- Floyd
- Franklin
- Henry
- Martinsville
- Montgomery
- Patrick
- Pittsylvania
- Roanoke City
- Roanoke County
- Salem

### Region 7

- Bland
- Bristol
- Buchanan
- Carroll
- Dickenson
- Galax
- Giles
- Grayson
- Lee
- Norton
- Pulaski
- Radford
- Russell
- Scott
- Smyth
- Tazewell
- Washington
- Wise
- Wythe