



Special Teachers and Exceptional Pupils = Urban Promise

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Important Dates

- **July 15:** Application Deadline for Spring 2006 cohort.
- **Summer Session:**
Classes: 5/31-7/20
Finals: July 21, 22
- **August 22:** Fall Semester Instruction begins.
- **September 13:** 4-4:50 rm 2417, Mentor Connection.
- **October 18:** 4-4:50 rm 2417, Field Advisory.
- **November 15:** 4-4:50 rm 2417, Field Advisory.

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Accommodations, Adaptations and Modifications: Part II

In the last issue we defined and began to address when, how, and why special educators use accommodations, adaptations, and modifications. In this issue we will further define their use. Modifications, accommodations, and adaptations are also used in the inclusion/general education classroom and the self-contained special education classroom. When a teacher is faced with a room of students with multiple classifications, he or she must make different plans for the students as stated in their IEPs. Perhaps one student has an emotional disorder which calls for them to have constant prompting to stay on task, while another requires directions to be read aloud to him. As an educator, a good way to start is by looking at the modifications sheets of the IEPs for the students on your caseload.

Often students with emotional disorders are put into the self-contained classroom. These students present an interesting challenge for the educator, as they often require on level course work while their peers in the self contained room do not. Their modification will probably be to make the material interesting and challenging enough to hold interest. The best way to do this is to initiate project oriented learning, much as is the movement in the general classroom. For a science class possible activities might be: breaking into groups of six and starting a jigsaw project on what makes something living, making a visual representation of the parts of the cell, or relating the parts of a cell to a city and illustrating it. In a literature class activities might include: book clubs around different groups of interest to the students, ending in a culminating project of the group making a board game, or a research project which culminates in a visual aspect like a poster or model. Math projects might include building a scale drawing and model of a

student's dream house, or making comparison charts after measuring various items at home and at school. The possibilities for projects and group work are endless, and allow all students to work at their own level around a theme, so that everyone can address similar content matter while working within their strengths.

How do we know if our accommodations, modifications, and adaptations are working? We assess student performance, often in a variety of ways. Traditional methods include testing, though current research points to rubrics, which include students in the scoring process, as being more helpful. The more that students can be involved in their own learning, the more invested in the experience of learning they are and the more successful they will become. Certainly, accommodations may work. That being the case, they must be changed as the student succeeds to meet his or her new needs. If they do not succeed several questions must be asked. Did the student attempt the modifications, if not, was the material too hard for the student? Was it a question of lack of motivation on the part of the student? If so, why was the student not motivated? Was there a part of our instruction that did not empower the student to work on his or her own? Did the student go through a difficult time at home or in the school? As reflective practitioners, we must constantly be asking our students, our colleagues, and ourselves how we may better serve the students in front of us.

Student Focus: Spotlight on Neil Goldman

The first STEP=UP program graduate, Neil Goldman, discusses his feelings about student teaching, and its implications:

How did you modify, adapt and accommodate for your students? The techniques that I learned at UIC for teaching students with disabilities turned out to be highly effective in the classroom. For example, I used a lot of direct instruction with much guided practice to teach some of the more basic reading, writing, and test taking skills. I presented the material via a variety of modalities, such as video, artistic, musical, and so on, to try to make the big concepts more accessible to as many of my students as possible. I also allowed my students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge using a variety of assessment techniques rather than requiring all of them to sit down and take a traditional paper and pencil multiple-choice test. These techniques, and many others I learned in my classes, helped to improve my students' overall comprehension of the curriculum

How did you do the above in an inclusion classroom?

Open communication with the general education teachers is essential to maintain a good relationship with them and to facilitate your assisting your students in the general education classroom. One thing that's very important to keep in mind is that you should not single out the students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. *For more of the interview please see:* <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/stepup/neilgoldman.html>

Digital Corner

There are many pages which exist as lists of resources. One such page has many suggestions from actual teachers about modification in many elementary situations:

<http://www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/SpecialEducation.html>

Accommodations and modification must also be written into the IEP. A website from the state of Tennessee gives a list of links for help and also a list of modifications by type of disability: <http://www.slc.sevier.org/alliep.htm>

Modifying for inclusion into the general classroom is a different proposition. A long list of modifications and an extensive bibliography is listed at: <http://www.slc.sevier.org/mods.htm>

Standardized testing may involve different accommodations than in general classroom instruction, though these have changed with NCLB. The state of New Jersey lists its accommodations for testing at: <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/specialed/accom900.htm>

Current Research

Researchers closing in on the genetic structure of autism and related disorders

By Jim Dryden

A research team at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis has identified regions of DNA that may be related to risk for autism.

The researchers are learning how autism is inherited, and to identify genetic factors, they're studying families and looking for traits that normally aren't considered autistic but have connections to autism risk. Several studies have demonstrated that autism has a strong genetic component. If one child in a family is autistic, there's about a 10 percent chance that a sibling also will have autism.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that one baby in every 250 is born with autism. As many as 1.5 million Americans are believed to have some form of autism, and that number is on the rise. Epidemiologists estimate the number of autistic Americans could reach 4 million in the next decade.

It's four times more prevalent in boys than in girls, but autism does not seem to affect any racial, ethnic or social group more than others. Autism also is not an "all-or-nothing" disorder, according to John N. Constantino, M.D., associate professor of psychiatry and of pediatrics at Washington University School of Medicine. There is a wide range of possibilities between the extremes.

"Although we once believed you either had this condition or you didn't, we now know there's a continuous distribution of autism symptoms from very mild to very severe," Constantino says.

That means it's possible for healthy people to have very subtle impairments that may indicate genetic tendencies that contribute to autism when they occur in certain combinations.

Constantino, a staff physician at St. Louis Children's Hospital, measures such subtle indicators with a diagnostic interview tool called the Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS) that he developed with colleague Richard D. Todd, Ph.D., M.D., the Franche F. Ittleson Professor of Psychiatry, professor of genetics and director of the William Greenleaf Eliot Division of Child Psychiatry at Washington University. For the rest of the article:

http://news-info.wustl.edu/tips/page_normal/5716.html