

First, the kindergarten teacher described the observable behaviors that students without disabilities exhibited during self-selected reading, including selecting a book from the book bins, turning pages, tracking text with their fingers and/or eyes, and mouthing the words as they were reading. These behaviors were entered in column two. Next, the team discussed whether Tomas could participate like his classmates without disabilities by doing the same behavior in the same way or whether he would need an alternate way to participate. They recorded “same” or “alternate” in column three for each of the “do’s” in column two. Then the team discussed the specific supports that Tomas would need for each of his alternate participation behaviors and recorded them in column four. The team agreed that Tomas could choose his own book from a personalized book bin. An alternate behavior of reading softly aloud would be allowed for Tomas as this is typical for other kindergarteners and would not be disruptive. The team agreed that Tomas would benefit from having his paraprofessional use her finger to track the text, as Tomas’ visual difficulties often interfered with his ability to follow the text easily. They also felt that a social story supplemented by a reading task card might help Tomas internalize the self-selected reading routine.

The team decided that Tomas would need to use his augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device (DynaVox V+™)(DynaVox Mayer-Johnson, 2012) to ask questions of his teacher or make a comment to a classmate. The team determined that Tomas, like Amanda, might benefit from having an aided language board (Beck, 2002). Finally, team member responsibilities for creating these supports were recorded in column five of the planning form.

### **Finding Time for Instructional Planning Meetings**

The Beyond Access Model routines-based instructional planning process recognizes that students’ teams need administrative and organizational supports in order to teach their students well. Having a regular instructional planning meeting is one of these essential team supports. Finding time to meet is sometimes not easy, particularly if the school’s master schedule has not been created with this planning time in mind. Schools that have used the Beyond Access Model have employed creative strategies for finding common planning time (Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier, 2010) including:

- Rotate a substitute teacher throughout the building on the day that planning meetings take place
- Hold meetings during recess and rotate the responsibility for serving the recess duty (i.e., week 1 the speech-language pathologist covers the duty, week 2 the occupational therapist covers the duty, week 3 the general education teacher covers the duty, etc.)
- Build common planning time into related service providers’ service hours (i.e., speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist)
- Hire substitutes or engage trained volunteers to cover duties (e.g., lunchroom, recess)
- Principal, Assistant Principal, reading specialist, or other certified staff member covers classes while teachers attend meetings
- Develop partnership with university programs (e.g., physical and health education, outdoor education, teacher education) and have pre-internship students cover classes

### **Discussion**

The Beyond Access Model was first used from 2002-2008 with educational teams in 14 schools in New Hampshire that were part of federally funded discretionary projects. Since that time it has been adopted by schools in several other U.S. states. Team members from the original model demonstration schools who were surveyed after using the Beyond Access Model for six months reported the following outcomes:

- Team members presumed students to be more competent to learn grade level academic content
- Students spent significantly more time in general education classrooms
- Students' communication skills improved
- Students demonstrated more learning of general education curriculum content
- Team meetings were more efficient and team collaboration more effective
- School-family relationships improved

The limitations of the case study research that has been conducted on the Beyond Access Model include:

- The studied cases may not be representative of all students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.
- Too few students and their teams have been studied to allow for generalization of results.
- The Model consists of many interrelated elements and it is not known which features make the most significant contributions to improvements in student learning.

Further research is needed to answer the following questions about the Beyond Access Model in general and the instructional planning process specifically:

- What features of the Model contribute to positive outcomes?
- How might the routines-based instructional planning process be nested within a Universal Design for Learning framework for all students?
- What team and system level supports contribute to implementation of the planned supports with fidelity?
- How sustainable is the Model when it is used outside of the context of a university-based demonstration project?

### **Conclusion**

Including students with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be a rewarding endeavor for students, their parents, and their teachers. It is supported by over 30 years of research and meets the intent of IDEA. Using the Beyond Access Model routines-based instructional planning process helps assure that all students are held to high expectations and that they have the supports they need to go from simply being physically present in a general education class to being valued members and full participants.

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