



VCASE Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue 1

Fall 2004

President's Pen

As educational leaders, there are two times of the year when we are likely to think about New Year Resolutions—January 1 and the beginning of a new *school* year. As this new school year begins, I am pleased to share with you a great resource for inspiring each of us to think about resolutions related to leadership.

In their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, authors James Kouzes and Barry Posner identify practices that are common among highly successful leaders. These practices are identified as The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership:

- Model the Way
- Inspire a Shared Vision
- Challenge the Process
- Enable Others to Act
- Encourage the Heart

Model the way refers to modeling the behavior that we expect of others. In order for leaders to effectively demonstrate this practice, there are two essential commitments that must be acted upon:

- √ Find your voice by clarifying your personal values.
- √ Set the example by aligning actions with shared values.

Kouzes and Posner emphasize that before we can clearly communicate our message, we must be clear about the message we want to deliver. Also, before we can *do* what we say, we must be sure we *mean* what we say.

The authors write that “every organization, every social movement, begins with a dream” and leaders must have a desire to change the way things are, to create something that no one else has created before. To *inspire a shared vision*, the following commitments and actions are essential:

IN THIS ISSUE:

President's Pen--Page 1

Virginia's State Improvement Grant for 2004-2007--Page 2

A Framework for Improving Adolescent Literacy--Page 2-5

Recent Significant Special Education Decisions--Page 6

VCASE Spring Conference Wrap Up--Page 7

√ Envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities.

√ Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.

Leaders *challenge the process*. They are pioneers who are willing to step out into the unknown and search for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve. Leaders are often not the creators or originators of new products or services. They primarily contribute by listening to others such as those on the front line and recognizing and supporting their good ideas. The practice of challenging the process is manifested through the following commitments and actions:

√ Search for opportunities by seeking innovative ways to change, grow, and improve.

√ Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from mistakes. Ask yourself, “If I were just starting this job, what would I do?”

We must remember that leadership is a team effort and that the actions of a single person do not make dreams into realities. Exemplary leaders foster collaboration, build trust, and *enable others to act*. Positive face-to-face interaction is cited as the most powerful influence on whether or not group goals get achieved. In addition, the following actions are important:

√ Foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust.

√ Strengthen others by sharing power and discretion.

Exemplary leaders recognize that genuine acts of caring uplift peoples' spirits and help them to move forward. Recognition helps demonstrate connections between behavior and values and helps to result in a celebratory culture. The following commitments and practices are essential to *encourage the heart*:

√ Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence.

√ Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

Have a great school year and best wishes in fulfilling your new school year resolutions!

Patricia Addison

**Virginia's State Improvement Grant
for 2004-2007:**

***Enhancing Access to the General Curriculum
for Middle and High School Students with
Disabilities in Virginia***

Division of Special Education and Student Services
Dr. Patricia Abrams, Director
Office of Special Education Instructional Services



Virginia's State Improvement Grant (SIG) initiative seeks to address the complex policy, service delivery, and academic improvement challenges faced by middle and high school youth with mild-moderate disabilities and their families. *Enhancing Access to the General Curriculum for Middle and High School Students with Disabilities in Virginia* is a three-year project strategically designed to focus at the middle and secondary school levels. Grounded in Virginia's Standards of Learning and accountability system, are high expectations for academic achievement for all students, including students with disabilities. Yet, Virginia's accountability system finds that many students with disabilities will not meet the Virginia standards for graduating with an advanced studies, standard, or modified standard diploma.

The intended outcomes of this project are to:

- design systemic and evidence-based practices that frame the essential components and policies for effective service delivery in middle and high school settings,
- develop statewide capacity for sustainability for evidenced-based instructional practice and service delivery in middle and high schools,
- improve middle to high school transition and long-term planning and understanding by youth with disabilities and their families, and
- directly influence evidence-based pre-service and in-service professional development regarding instructional practice and service delivery for adolescents with mild-moderate disabilities.

As part of the project, the Virginia Department of Education will select four school sites that are eligible and willing to adopt the Content Literacy Continuum (CLC) in their schools.

A Framework for Improving Adolescent Literacy

**B. Keith Lenz, Barbara Ehren, & Donald D. Deshler
University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning**

Administrators and teachers in secondary schools throughout the United States have come to realize the impact that insufficient reading, writing, and math skills have on the ability of adolescents to acquire the information included in the core curriculum. This attention is largely the result of state initiatives to set standards and measure the attainment of these standards through standards-based tests. Whole schools are the focus of accountability, and principals are being held directly accountable for the leadership they provide in helping change curriculum and instruction to increase test scores. Test scores are more public than ever, and administrators are evaluated and rewarded (or punished) based on how well their school performs compared to other schools and how much progress they are making on tests given to measure achievement towards meeting standards.

This is a new journey for high schools, junior high schools, and many middle schools that historically have focused on content acquisition rather than the foundational skills and strategies required to enable content acquisition. Almost no efforts have been made to help faculty develop school-wide approaches to attacking the literacy problem at the secondary level. However, for the past 15 years, a major research emphasis of the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (KU-CRL) has been to design and test the implementation of effective school-wide literacy instruction in secondary schools. The resultant outcome of this work has been the development of a framework, the *Content Literacy Continuum (CLC)*, for thinking about ways to effectively leverage the talents of secondary school faculty to improve outcomes for adolescents (including those with disabilities) and to organize instruction in a way that will intensify instruction as the deficits that certain subgroups of students demonstrate become evident.

The Content Literacy Continuum has been a very useful mechanism for incorporating the various interventions embodied within the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) that have been developed by the KU-CRL over the past 25 years. However, as a framework, the CLC is sufficiently comprehensive in scope to accommodate intervention that has been validated with adolescent populations. In short, the CLC is a tool for enabling teachers and administrators (from both general and special education) to evaluate the literacy instruction and/or services that are currently being offered within a school and to formulate an action plan for improving the quality of services

provided that will result in dramatically improved literacy outcomes for all students, especially those at risk, in a school.

The CLC is grounded in five basic notions about adolescent literacy:

1. The purpose of literacy is to increase the learning of critical content. Literacy cannot be developed separately from the core secondary curriculum. Students learn skills because they need them to meet the demands that they face; the skills become relevant because they enable students to do authentic tasks. Simultaneously, direct and regular application of skills in critical content provides the practice and exploration that plant literacy skills permanently in learner knowledge banks.

2. Content literacy requires fluent decoding. Students can be expected to use basic skills to learn critical content only after they have begun to read words fluently. Although some strategies provide a bridge between decoding and comprehension (for example, the Word Identification Strategy), provisions must be put in place to ensure that all secondary students are fluent word readers. For many students, this must begin with work on decoding words. Students reading below a fourth-grade reading level need to be placed in intensive research-based reading programs, such as The Corrective Reading Program (Decoding), published by SRA, to profit from the secondary core curriculum.

3. Common strategies should be taught and reinforced across all teachers. The steps of strategies such as Paraphrasing, Self-Questioning, Word Identification, and Visual Imagery validated through KU-CRL research should be learned by all secondary teachers. The steps of the strategies are then taught in different ways, at different times, by different teachers. The key, however, is that all teachers create a culture within a building where a common set of strategies are valued, discussed, and nurtured, albeit differently, across all teachers. Therefore, when a teacher asks a student to paraphrase, the expectations and criteria for satisfactory performance is consistently applied across courses.

4. Responsive and systematic instruction is provided on a continuum of intensity. The tasks associated with successfully teaching strategies and then ensuring successful content applications require planning and negotiation. The responsibilities of the general education teacher, support teachers, paraeducators, parents, peers, etc., must be carefully defined to ensure that instruction is provided along a continuum of intensity. When students are provided with instruction in a strategy during large group instruction in the core curriculum, that instruction must be consistent with the goals of the subject area. When group instruction is insufficient, provisions must be made to deliver

instruction that is more sensitive to student needs or more systematic in the process of applying the strategy. Other, more intense learning experiences may be needed to provide more support and to lead the student to mastery.

5. Students master critical content regardless of literacy competence. Finally, and most importantly, secondary teachers must make a major shift in their thinking about curriculum design and delivery. This shift requires that teachers move away from simply covering the available content. Curriculum design should focus on organizing curriculum experiences around the socially compelling critical content and then developing plans and teaching routines that ensure that all students (for whom the core general education curriculum has been judged to be appropriate) master that content regardless of skill levels. This is an important requirement for improving content literacy because it ensures that students acquire the background knowledge required if the curriculum is truly a core curriculum that has high social costs if it is not acquired. Students should not be further handicapped by requiring that they use the very skills we know they do not have to acquire the critical content. In essence, this outcome should be the standard by which core-curriculum teachers and their methods should be evaluated.

There are five levels of services associated with the CLC. These five levels are based on keeping content as a central focus in literacy efforts, defining roles and responsibilities, providing a continuum of instructional intensity for ensuring success for a wide range of students, and providing a framework for integrating a variety of literacy improvement efforts. Each of these levels is described below and together they represent a framework for organizing secondary reform around the goal of improved literacy.

Level 1: Enhanced Content Instruction

What students do: All students learn *critical* content required in the core curriculum regardless of literacy levels.

What teachers do: Teachers ensure mastery of *critical core content* for all students regardless of literacy levels by leveraging the principles of universal design to use explicit teaching routines. Teachers ensure that all students acquire the vocabulary and background knowledge required for basic literacy associated with comprehension and communication through class-wide accommodations, individual accommodations, or technology. Further, they respond to complex content literacy demands that require strategic manipulation and use of content information such as categorizing, developing analogies, comparing, questioning, or evaluating.

What it looks like: The history teacher introduces a unit on “Causes of the Civil War” by co-constructing with students a Unit Organizer, a graphic organizer used to depict the critical content demands of the unit. The organizer is used throughout the unit to link student prior knowledge to the new unit and to prompt basic learning strategies such as paraphrasing and self-questioning. The Concept Mastery Routine is used to help students explore important concepts such as “sectionalism.” Other routines provide the foundations for students to learn how to respond to more complex literacy demands that often require inquiry into critical questions and construction of explanations. **Professional competence:** Teachers responsible for ensuring content mastery must *select the critical content*, learn how to enhance that content for mastery, and then implement these enhancements through the use of explicit and sustained teaching routines. Special service providers must help core curriculum teachers provide this type of instruction. This facilitates a mindset in which instruction is delivered in ways that students acquire content information as well as active approaches to learning and responding.

Level 2: Embedded Strategy Instruction

What students do: Students are introduced to and learn to use a set of powerful learning strategies for increasing literacy across their core curriculum classes and apply them to learn the *critical content*.

What teachers do: Teachers directly teach and then embed the use of selected learning strategies that match the specific demands required to learn *critical content* in core curriculum courses. For students receiving more intensive strategy instruction (Level 3), teachers assist them in generalizing strategy use to core curriculum courses. Teachers use direct explanation, modeling, and group practice to teach the strategy and then prompt student application and practice in content-area assignments throughout the school year. Instruction in strategies is embedded across a number of instructional settings, including settings where tutoring is provided.

What it looks like: For example, at the beginning of the year, the history teacher explains that being able to paraphrase the history text is important because paraphrasing is required to write reports, answer questions, and discuss ideas. The teacher shares the steps of the *The Paraphrasing Strategy* (e.g., RAP) with students and models how to paraphrase history text to complete different types of learning tasks. Class activities and assignments are designed to require students to paraphrase text and use information. Both oral and written information is

paraphrased. Paraphrased responses may take an oral or written format. Graphic organizers (e.g., The Unit Organizer) that have been introduced as part of Level 1 are used to model and prompt paraphrasing of critical chunks of content. The teacher continually evaluates and provides feedback to encourage high quality paraphrasing throughout the year. The teacher explains that all teachers in the school will be using, modeling, and prompting RAP.

Professional competence: Teachers adopt a mindset that it is important to embed instruction in learning strategies within content-area instruction. Content teachers learn a shortened form of an instructional sequence for selected learning strategies (e.g., *Paraphrasing, Self-Questioning*, etc.) that they can use to provide class-wide instruction. Teachers assist in the generalization of strategies that may *emerge* from Level 1 instructional routines; these emerging strategies may guide students in strategic approaches to content literacy demands such as making comparisons, categorizing, or questioning.

Level 3: Intensive Strategy Instruction

What students do: Students who need more intensive instruction to ensure that they master the strategies presented across the courses offered by core curriculum teachers receive more support to learn them through specialized, more direct, more intense instruction delivered by support personnel.

What teachers do: Special education teachers and support personnel provide more intensive instruction via supplemental instruction sessions delivered in the general education classroom, in a pullout program, through the offering of a separate course, or through beyond-school programs.

What it looks like: For example, the history teacher notices that some students in the class are struggling with paraphrasing. Support personnel develop a plan to reintroduce the steps of *The Paraphrasing Strategy* (RAP) to this group of students. The special education teacher provides additional models and practice in paraphrasing text. The support personnel may guide the student through paraphrasing paragraph-by-paragraph, gradually encouraging students to paraphrase more independently. Explicit feedback and additional practice are provided. Support personnel may work daily for 15-20 minutes a day for three or four weeks until the student gains the confidence and masters application of the strategy. As the strategy is learned, the student sees the strategy being required in his history class and other classes and gets the message that this is a valued skill that is worth learning.

Professional competence: Special education and other support personnel learn how to provide intensive and explicit instruction, practice, and feedback in specific learning strategies and the process of strategic tutoring that shows students how to apply strategies as they complete assignments.

Level 4: Basic Skill Instruction

What students do: Students develop the foundational decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills through specialized, direct, and intensive instruction in reading. Intensive instruction in listening, speaking, and writing can also be part of these services. Services may be delivered in a pullout program, through the offering of a separate course, or through beyond-school programs.

What teachers do: Special education teachers, reading specialists, and speech-language pathologists team to develop intensive and coordinated instructional experiences designed to address severe literacy deficits. Special education teachers and reading specialists will most likely deliver these services. They also assist content teachers in making appropriate modifications in content instruction to accommodate severe literacy deficits.

What it looks like: For example, some students appear to have significant difficulty comprehending because they do not have sufficient decoding skills or they have language problems. Sometimes, these problems are identified before strategy instruction begins and sometimes the problems emerge during strategy instruction. The staff as a team develops options for courses and support services that directly address deficits that cannot be addressed through less intensive efforts. However, the students can still participate in the history class because the teacher is presenting content in ways that take into consideration poor reading strategies. Intensive research-based programs such as *The Corrective Reading Program* are typically chosen as the curriculum to develop these types of services.

Professional competence: Special education teachers and reading specialists learn research-based approaches to implementing programs that develop foundational literacy skills and strategies to students with disabilities.

Level 5: Therapeutic Intervention

What students do: Students with underlying disorders learn the linguistic, related cognitive, metalinguistic, and metacognitive underpinnings they need to acquire content literacy skills and strategies.

What teachers do: Speech-language pathologists deliver curriculum-relevant language therapy in collaboration with special education and other support personnel who are teaching literacy. Speech-language pathologists collaborate with special education teachers to assist content teachers in

making appropriate modifications or accommodations in content instruction to address the needs of students with language disorders. Speech-language pathologists work with special education teachers to assist students with language disorders to acquire learning strategies.

What it looks like: For example, students identified as language impaired may have difficulty learning *The Paraphrasing Strategy* even when it is taught by learning strategists in a language-sensitive fashion. They may need clinical intervention delivered by individuals who can address the linguistic and metalinguistic underpinnings of the *Paraphrasing Strategy* (RAP) and the academic content.

Professional competence: Speech-language pathologists learn curriculum-relevant approaches to language therapy that interface with other intensive intervention provided to students. Speech-language pathologists and special education teachers learn to collaborate to provide coordinated and integrated services.

*Adapted from: Lenz, K. & Ehren (1999) The strategic content literacy initiative: Focusing on reading in secondary schools. *Stratenotes*, 8.1. (Published by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. www.kuclrl.org)

VCASE Regional Representatives 2004-2005

Region I - Dr. Sheila Bailey,
Hopewell City Public Schools

Region II- Dr. Joan Spratley,
Norfolk Public Schools

Region III- Ms. Sue Clark,
Stafford County Public Schools

Region IV- Ms. Susan Groom,
Winchester Public Schools
Ms. Marylou Wall,
Alexandria City Public Schools

Region V- Ms. Diane Wolfe,
Fluvanna County Public Schools

Region VI- Dr. Patricia Matthews Radcliffe,
Roanoke County Public Schools

Region VII- Mr. Gary Collins,
Smyth County Public Schools

Region VIII- Ms. Alice McCormick,
Prince Edward County Public Schools

RECENT SIGNIFICANT SPECIAL EDUCATION DECISIONS

By
Kathleen S. Mehfoud

Reed Smith LLP
Riverfront Plaza, West Tower
901 East Byrd Street, Suite 1700
Richmond, VA 23219
804.344.3421
kmehfoud@reedsmith.com

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit issued two extremely important decisions in past months dealing with special education. Both of these decisions were in favor of school boards and addressed such important topics as manifestation determinations, the definition of educational placement and the burden of proof in due process hearings.

The Fourth Circuit decided the case, AW v. Fairfax County School Board, on June 24, 2004. The student in this case was identified as having an emotional disturbance. In addition to having the emotional disturbance, AW was diagnosed as having ADHD and ODD. AW's IEP provided that he would receive one hour per week of special education services. AW was recommended for discipline because he plotted with another student to place a threatening note on the computer file of a third student. AW related that he did not like this student and wanted to scare him and, therefore, conspired to have the threatening note sent to the student. The manifestation committee met and determined that this misconduct was not a manifestation of AW's disability. Ultimately, the Fairfax County Public Schools decided that it would not expel AW and, instead, transferred him to a program at another elementary school for the remainder of the school year. His IEP services were implemented in total at the second elementary school.

The Fourth Circuit held that the reassignment of AW from one elementary school to a second elementary school was not a change in educational placement requiring parent consent. An educational placement is "not the location at which the student is assigned, but rather the environment in which educational services are provided." There was no change in placement because there was no change in the student's IEP services as a result of the assignment to the different school. A change in placement would have occurred, however, "if the change in location . . . results in a dilution of the quality of the student's education or a departure from the student's LRE-compliant setting. . . ." A transfer between "materially identical settings" does not implicate the stay-put provision of the IDEA.

The Court also reviewed the manifestation determination which was made in this case. The Court held that AW was identified as emotionally disturbed because of his difficulties in maintaining focus and completing academic tasks. The Court also noted that the ADHD diagnosis was the primary reason for the identification as disabled, but not the ODD diagnosis. This conclusion was reached in large part from the Court's review of the psychologist's evaluation and the eligibility committee minutes. The close scrutiny of these two documents by the Court suggests that careful attention should be paid to how evaluations and eligibility reports are prepared. The Court concluded that there was no manifestation because it was "undisputed that AW is an intelligent student, and that AW was not only aware of the consequences of sending the threatening message to the targeted student, but anticipated them by enlisting another student to actually place the note. To the extent that students with ADHD may be described as impulsive, the circumstances of the conduct for which AW was disciplined indicated forethought and investigation, as he had to figure out a way to gain access to his target's personal folder." The Court determined that there was no manifestation in this situation. This decision provides guidance regarding the reassignment of students to another school and also regarding the criteria by which manifestation determinations will be judged by the courts.

The second case issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit is the case Weast v. Schaffer decided July 29, 2004. In this case, the Federal District Court had held that the burden of proving the appropriateness of an IEP fell on the parents regardless of whether the parents or the school division initiated the due process hearing. The Fourth Circuit concluded "because we have no valid reason to depart from the general rule that the party initiating the proceeding has the burden of proof, we reverse and remand." In this case, the parents were the parties who initiated the due process hearing challenging the IEP. The Court held that they would have the burden of proving that the proposed IEP was inappropriate. The Fourth Circuit reached this conclusion even though the parents argued that the school division was in the position of a "natural advantage" in IEP disputes because the school division has a better understanding of the IDEA procedures and greater educational expertise than parents. The Court, in reviewing this argument, determined that the IDEA was silent regarding who has the burden of proof and that "regardless of which side has the burden of proof in an administrative hearing, parents will have to offer expert testimony to show the proposed IEP is inadequate. Shifting the burden of proof, in other words, will not enable parents by themselves to mount a serious, substantive challenge to an IEP." As a result, the Court concluded that parents who initiate a hearing to challenge an IEP bear the burden of proof.

Spring Conference Wrap Up

by Jane Rice

This year's Spring Conference at the Beach was a huge success! Did you know that 281 people--the highest registration ever--attended the conference! Here are a few of the highlights recaptured....

Dr. Mary Mehaffey, Assistant Superintendent from Isle of Wight County Schools, was honored at the luncheon business meeting with the James T. Micklem award.



VCASE President, Pat Addison, presents

Dr. Mary Mehaffey with the James T. Micklem award.

We surprised Mary with this award and added to the special event by inviting her School Board Chairwoman to assist in the presentation of this award. Mary has contributed many years to the field of special education and she continues to inspire up and coming leaders in our field.

VCASE honored several retirees this year at the business meeting.



From left: Sharry Schlain, Carolyn Mills, and Frank Rixey

Frank Rixey of Hanover, Sharry Schlain of Virginia Beach, and Carolyn Mills of Culpeper were given engraved Jefferson Cups to commemorate their service to students with disabilities.

The conference was made more memorable this year by the addition of music at the President's reception. The band, Sol Libre, serenaded members as they networked and enjoyed the scrumptious food and then inspired many to get up and dance!



Tom Nash and Pat Addison dance to the tunes of Sol Libre.

Many members commented how fabulous this event was and that we should do this next year. One conference participant wrote on the evaluation form "Overall, this has been the best VCASE conference that I have attended. Good job to the committee and the officers!" Another participant wrote "As always – a top notch event!" The executive committee thanks all of the participants who took the time to complete a conference evaluation. The comments and suggestions are always used in planning the next conference.



Thank you from the VCASE Executive Committee for a very successful spring conference!

The Hershey bars seemed to motivate some of us to renew our memberships at the conference. There are currently 215 active members. There are a number of members whose renewal comes up in the fall. Don't forget to renew your membership either by mail or at the fall Policy Institute on October 20-21st! See you in Charlottesville!

VCASE FALL 2004 CONFERENCE

**When and Where: October 20-21st at the
DoubleTree Hotel in Charlottesville**

**Sponsor: VCASE and the Virginia
Department of Education**

Further Registration Information:

www.vcase.org

VCASE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CONTACT INFORMATION



PRESIDENT
PATRICIA ADDISON
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Paddison@fcps.edu



SECRETARY
MS. JANE RICE
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES
SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
rice@spotsylvania.k12.va.us



PRESIDENT-ELECT
THOMAS F. NASH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTERVENTION
PREVENTION SERVICES
ALBEMARLE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
nash@albemarle.org



TREASURER
MS. KAY COOPER
SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
cooperk@pwcs.edu



EXECUTIVE SECRETARY &
PRINCIPAL NEWSLETTER EDITOR
DR. JANE RAZEGHI
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
jrazeghi@gmu.edu



PAST PRESIDENT
DR. RICK RICHARDSON
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
HANOVER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
rrichardson@hcps.us

Dr. Jane A. Razeghi
VCASE Newsletter Editor
15174 Stillfield Place
Centreville, VA 20120