

## Time To Meet & Plan Modifications

Finding time to meet and communicate is usually a challenge for most teams. However, we need to designate time to program plan and modify for the ongoing change in activities in the regular classroom. Preparation of materials is also important, and we need to creatively look for ways to incorporate this into the day. The following are issues for the team to consider.



### Program Planning

Meetings between the case manager, teaching assistant and classroom teacher often occur on a bi-weekly basis for many teams. It is important to be clear about each person's role in the meeting (e.g., the classroom teacher may bring an art and/or science activity to the meeting for the resource teacher to facilitate brainstorming around adaptations or modifications for active participation and practice on skills.)

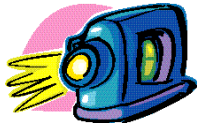


Teachers need to advocate to their principal for regular meeting time with their assistants. Teachers need to let their assistants know about daily and weekly events ahead of time to prepare. Meeting on the run is not good to rely on for program planning. Establishing regular meeting time may involve some creative time management. In order to find release time for the classroom teacher, some districts have used the following strategies:

- The principal may teach one class a week or every other week for the regular classroom teacher.
- Some schools use portions of school based professional development days to meet and plan.
- Two classes may be able to combine for one period of music or watch a video to free up one classroom teacher.
- Some schools or districts have set aside special education funds for the year to release the classroom teacher for planning.
- Some teams use staggered arrival and/or departure times to free up assistants to meet with teachers.
- Some teams use part of the IEP time to begin working out the schedule for the student.
- A daily communication log can help with on-going communication but still does not replace the need for one to one program planning and brainstorming.



- Classroom teachers can share their yearly overview with the resource teacher, assistant and therapists in order to help plan modifications for inclusion for upcoming themes and activities.
- Several parents may be able to come in and monitor an art activity (assist students working independently) while the classroom teacher meets in the room with the assistant and resource teacher.



- Some teachers and assistants meet at a back table during the class' individual quiet seatwork time or when they are watching a movie.
- Free time may be created for the assistant by having a high school work experience student work with the special needs student for a break.
- Some entire schools have established "time set in stone" during school hours when the team has a bit of free time (e.g., all students are in music). They find it helpful to have an agenda with time limits and a simple format for efficiency.
- A school based library teacher, P.E. teacher or music teacher may free up the classroom teacher to meet with their assistant. Other times when the teacher and assistant may be able to meet could occur during a regularly scheduled P.E. tournament, swim time, buddy reading.
- Some teachers trade their prep or supervision time by covering each other's classes during an assembly. They meet with their assistant during this time. Others may use the end of their preparation period to meet with the assistant.
- Some schools and principals negotiate preparation/planning time provided by the teacher in exchange for some other benefit or privilege.
- Sometimes assistants can double up and cover for each other to release one assistant to meet with their classroom teacher.
- A parent or an older student could read a story or couple of chapters from a novel to the class, while the classroom teacher meets in the room with the resource teacher and assistant.
- Some assistants find time to meet in the room with the teacher when their student is content and managing somewhat independently within an activity (e.g., using a switch to listen to music with headphones).
- A district itinerant resource teacher might provide support to the school resource teacher or classroom teacher by teaching his/her class once a week or every other week to provide planning time with the assistants.

Trading time for meetings is always a bit of a balancing act...but the rewards are seen in the student's meaningful inclusive activities. Assistants are much clearer about their expectations for active participation with regular input from classroom teachers.



## Preparation Time

Teaching assistants need to have materials developed for adapted or modified activities. (e.g., Tapes or a Step-by-Step Communicator may need to be prepared with science experiment steps or spelling crossword clues). Without the time to prepare these necessary materials, the student's programming ideas cannot be carried out. The following are some considerations regarding the challenge in finding time to do this.

- A parent volunteer or two could be trained to develop materials with instructions left for them. In this way, they may also become familiar with some of the skills that the student is working on.
- A peer from the student's class may be shown how to work with him/her on a particular task (e.g., using a switch with a repetitive phrase during a story). The teacher would be present in the room with the student and the teaching assistant would identify where he/she would be working preparing the materials, should a problem arise.
- The resource teacher might work with the student on an activity for a period while the teaching assistant prepares materials for an upcoming activity. This gives the resource teacher hands on experience with the student as well.
- Perhaps peers or buddies from the student's class or an older class in the school, could be shown how to prepare some of the materials. If they finish their work, they could help program the Step by Step for an upcoming project.



## Time For Training

Some district teams throughout B.C. have identified the following strategies, which they use to find time for staff training. Select the ones, which may work for your school or district.

- early dismissal days twice a month in one district, help create planning time
- one district has a non-instructional Friday once a month
- an assistant gets paid for one hour after school and it's added to the pay sheet and teachers receive in lieu benefits (e.g., not having to supervise an extra curricular activity)
- casually bank student's sick time to use later
- co-teaching is used in some districts, (i.e., between the resource teacher and classroom teacher) where training occurs through modeling within the actual classroom
- the resource teacher teaches for the classroom teacher in one district, so that this person can meet with the assistant

- another district has increased the assistants' time but have fewer assistants in the district (i.e., fewer assistants with longer hours to cover planning, meeting and preparation for students)
- some schools extend the school day over 4 days so that there is early closure on day 5, which allows teachers and assistants to meet and plan or train
- "meet & eat" training meetings are arranged for training from 3:30 - 7:00 and include a dinner
- students in one school, do not attend school past June 17th but the assistants are paid until June 30th with an opportunity for training or to be paid for time previously used to connect with teachers outside of regular paid hours
- some schools use non-instructional funds once a month
- some schools arrange for meetings and training when student is away
- some teams plan longer IEP meetings and use the last part to mentor the assistant
- in one district, two people come to help the assistant (i.e., one to model interactions with the student and the other to explain what is going on and offer rationale)
- access district or school based consultation money for release time (e.g., the assistant adds the extra time to their time sheet out of this account)
- build in % of consult time versus direct instructional time for the resource teacher and/or therapists (e.g., 40% consult and 60% direct instruction in some districts)
- some districts allow the principal to take over the class to release the teacher
- some districts insist on training at colleges for their assistants
- other districts allocate resources for school based team meetings
- one district builds in 2 extra hours per week of paid time over the school day for time for meetings and field trips
- online training modules are offered for assistants in some districts
- many districts recognize the need to change the service delivery model (i.e., build planning time into the student's schedule just like other activities)
- some schools alternate lunch times for assistants to cover each other to free up more time (2 on 1)
- some assistants may be available during a student's regular "down time"
- many districts acknowledge the need to list expectations for training on the job posting description for both assistants and teachers

*These are a compilation of strategies which are used by different districts and schools and do not reflect any particular bias by the Provincial Integration Support Program.*