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ABSTRACT

Four information briefs offer guidelines for educators of students with deaf-blindness in integrated or self-contained settings, concerning: (1) facilitating student interactions; (2) adapting classroom materials and activities; (3) grouping students to increase interaction; and (4) implementing cooperative learning strategies. To facilitate interactions, teachers are urged to increase student proximity, structure activities, model appropriate communicative behaviors, adapt environment and materials, and increase enjoyable and preferred activities. To adapt classroom materials and activities, teachers should develop multisensory materials, include the student's primary mode of communication, make appropriate adaptations in the physical environment, and use peers as a resource in determining appropriate adaptations. Grouping strategies suggested include peer tutoring, the buddy system, "special friends," and small groups. Basic elements of cooperative learning activities are identified including positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, interpersonal and small-group social skills, individual accountability, and group processing. Examples are provided. (DB)

NOTES FOR EDUCATORS WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND:

The Role of the Teacher in Facilitating Interaction
Adapting Classroom Materials & Activities
Grouping Strategies to Increase Interaction
Cooperative Learning Strategies

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NOTES FOR EDUCATORS WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND:
The Role of the Teacher in Facilitating Interaction

1. **Increase Proximity**: While placing students together in the same room does not guarantee that social interaction will occur, physical proximity is the first step in facilitating awareness of others and promoting interaction between children.

2. **Identify Opportunities for Interaction**: For students in a self-contained special education classroom, natural opportunities for interaction are readily available within the school setting (e.g., recess on the playground; lunchroom; assemblies). New opportunities can also be created to facilitate continued interaction (e.g., special education teacher making arrangements with a general education teacher for an integrated classroom activity such as music, reading, or science). The teacher can begin by identifying *all* of the possible opportunities that exist during the school day. Next, work out a plan to make use of these opportunities regularly, starting with one or two and increasing from there.
   Example of a plan includes: (a) speak with a teacher from the general education program to create integrated activities during recess; (b) introduce your student who is deaf-blind to other children on the playground; and, (c) invite those same children to participate in a project with students in your class.

3. **Structure Activities**: The teacher can increase proximity and interaction between students by structuring activities in which students work together (versus alone) and share materials (versus each having their own).
   Examples include: (a) cooperative learning techniques; and (b) buddy systems.

4. **Model Appropriate Communicative Behaviors**: Students who are deaf-blind may communicate with the aid of adaptive equipment and/or in ways that may be unfamiliar. The teacher can provide peers with information or guidance about how the student communicates. By watching the teacher communicate with the student who is deaf-blind, peers can learn appropriate ways of communicating. It is important to remember that peers will model what they see the teacher doing in this new situation.

5. **Adapt Environment and Materials**: The teacher can create an environment that encourages participation and interaction. This includes adapting materials for the student who is deaf-blind as well as adapting activities [see handout: Adapting Classroom Materials].
   Factors to consider include: (a) identifying activities that encourage cooperation versus competition; (b) selecting age appropriate materials; (c) selecting materials that are tactually rich (versus materials that are non-tactual); and, (d) emphasizing the role of adult as facilitator of social interaction between students.

6. **Increase Enjoyable and Preferred Activities**: Observe students to get a sense for the type of activities that they enjoy and create opportunities during the day to allow them to engage in such activities. Students can be give the opportunity to make choices during activities, with physical or gestural prompts given by peers when needed.
   For example: (a) student can choose a partner; (b) select a game or book; and, (c) be the group leader.

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NOTES FOR EDUCATORS WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND:
Adapting Classroom Materials & Activities

1. **Adapt Materials to be Multi-Sensory:**
   Adults and peers can encourage the student who is deaf-blind to explore materials through touch, smell, and taste (when appropriate), and to make use of residual vision and/or hearing. Materials can be adapted prior to the activity by using braille, or tactile cues such as puff paint, sand paper, and other creative textures. Tactile materials offer students unique and creative ways of participating in activities.
   Examples include: (a) musical activities can be used during which children are invited to feel vibrations and initiate rhythmical movements; (b) art projects can emphasize a student's preference to paint, glue, or draw using bright colors and textural materials; and, (c) during reading, students can be paired together to listen to a story on tape with amplicifaction through earphones.

2. **Adapt Activities to Include the Student's Primary Mode of Communication:**
   Depending upon which form(s) of communication the student uses to convey information (e.g., sign language, picture cues, tactile symbols, etc.), adaptations can be created which naturally incorporate the mode of communication into planned social or academic activities. [see handout: Communication and Social Interaction].
   For example: (a) a Touch Talker, Speakeasy, Whisper Wolf or other electronic system can be programmed and used during a group lesson (e.g., student indicates that it is time for a group activity to begin by pressing a switch which calls everyone together, "Let's get started"; another student participates in the pledge of allegiance by pressing the picture of a flag on his Touch Talker); (b) during recess, a student uses his augmentative device to say "Red rover, red rover, let blue come over;" and, (c) the teacher gives student a tactile symbol (e.g., a lunch tray) to indicate that it is time to go to the cafeteria with a buddy.

3. **Adaptations in the Physical Environment:**
   The physical environment can encourage participation and interaction. Students can be positioned in close proximity to each other; the teacher can make sure that all students are physically part of the group [see handout: The Role of the Teacher in Facilitating Interaction].
   Examples include: (a) pushing desks together to form clusters or squares, rather than the traditional rows; (b) use mats, therapy benches, prone standers, and wheelchair trays as pieces of equipment for facilitating interaction (e.g., the student who is in a wheelchair shares her tray with two other peers).

4. **Use Peers as a Resource in Determining Appropriate Adaptations:**
   Peers without disabilities are resourceful and can be encouraged to provide assistance to the student with deaf-blindness. Peers can be directed by the teacher to identify how the student can participate in certain activities.
   For example: (a) peers involve student in coloring activity by asking him to choose the color of paper for a group project; and, (b) peers create picture board of different "Simon Says" commands so that student can point to commands during game while a partner calls them out, and the two can play the role of "Simon".

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NOTES FOR EDUCATORS WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND:
Grouping Strategies to Increase Interaction

1. **Peer Tutoring:**
   Older students without disabilities can offer the student who is deaf-blind guidance and assistance during activities. The amount of training necessary depends upon individual situations. Many successful peer tutoring programs work on a volunteer basis, with a special education teacher providing disability awareness information to the prospective peer tutors (e.g., on the combination of the student's vision and hearing loss, as well as why and how activities need to be adapted to increase participation). Often, peer tutors are older, and involve children in grades 5 through 7, or junior and senior high school students.
   Examples include: (a) peer tutor assists the student with an art activity; (b) peer tutor teams up with the student during a relay race; (c) reads a story to the student; (d) writes a letter with the student using the computer; and, (e) greets the student as they pass in the hallway, and introduces her to others in the school.

2. **Buddy System:**
   Regardless of the setting (inclusive, integrated, or special class) many activities can be completed in groups of two. The teacher can assign buddies, or the students can choose themselves. Buddies are usually the same chronological age as the target student with disabilities and are from the same class.
   Examples include: (a) students can be paired together during lunch, assemblies, and field trips; (b) science or art activities can be structured for students to work together as a pair; (c) students can work with buddies to complete daily schedule or classroom job (e.g., taking the attendance to the office); and, (d) recreation and leisure activities create natural opportunities for students to interact together, such as adapting and playing a board game, hanging out, and watching a basketball game or listening to music.

3. **Special Friends:**
   A special friend is someone that the student associates with during certain activities. A special friend does not have to be from the same class as the student who is deaf-blind. Because interaction is sometimes limited to once or twice weekly, teachers need to assess how much training and supervision is necessary based on individual needs and ages of the students. A special friend can be with the target student for either a few weeks or an unlimited period of time.
   Examples include: (a) special friends go to the library together to check out a book; (b) special friends go to lunch together and sit next to each other; and, (c) special friends go to science class together and help each other with a project.

4. **Small Groups:**
   When bringing together students for instruction (in inclusive, integrated, or special class), an alternative to teaching the whole group at once is to split the class into small groups. There are a variety of ways children can be placed into groups.
   These include: (a) students choose numbers or count off into groups; (b) students can already be sitting near one another; (c) students all wearing the same color form a group (e.g., the blue group, the red group); or, (d) teachers place students in groups of complimentary abilities (e.g., low/high achievers, talkers/non-talkers).
   Students meet and greet each other at the beginning of the activity. During the activity, adults rotate from group to group to monitor progress and facilitate interaction.

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NOTES FOR EDUCATORS WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND:
Cooperative Learning Strategies

Cooperative learning strategies can be used to increase student interaction and promote learning. Cooperative learning involves pairing students together in small groups, sharing materials, working toward the same goal, and working together -- or *"cooperatively."*

The five basic elements essential to cooperative learning activities are as follows:

1. **Positive Interdependence**: Students are "interdependent" upon each other--they can only succeed in a given task by working together. This is established through:

   A. **Goal Interdependence** -- there is only one goal for the group and everyone works toward it versus competing against each other (such as one completed assignment from the whole group).

   B. **Resource Interdependence** -- materials ("resources") are divided up among group members and each person must share with the other to complete the assignment (e.g., one pencil, one paper, one pair of scissors, one glue).

   C. **Role Interdependence** -- group members are each assigned specific roles (e.g., the "recorder" who writes things down; the "checker" who checks to make sure everyone understands; the "timer" who makes sure the group is working within the time limit; the "runner" who gets the needed materials from the front of the room and returns them at the end of the lesson).

   D. **Reward Interdependence** -- once the assignment is complete, the group (not just one or two members) receives a reward (rewards can be anything motivating or special, such as 10 minutes of recess, extra snack, stickers, or bonus points leading to a class party).

2. **Face-to-Face Interaction**: Students must sit in close proximity to each other. This facilitates sharing materials as well as promoting verbal and nonverbal interactions. (If students are separated by desk-space, their interactions will decrease, their voices will be louder, and they won't be able to share materials as easily.)

3. **Interpersonal and Small-Group Social Skills**: Students need to be taught skills that foster collaboration. Such skills include: encouraging other group members, praising each other, asking for help, offering help, sharing ideas, and using quiet voices.

4. **Individual Accountability**: Students must show they are learning the material at their own level.

5. **Group Processing**: Students need to discuss how they are doing in their groups and what they can improve upon. This allows students an opportunity to focus on "group maintenance" (which includes giving each other constructive feedback and discussing their collaborative skills).

[turn over for activity] ➔

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Examples of Cooperative Games and Activities

How to tell if games or activities promote cooperative interaction:

- Are students actually interacting or are they just taking turns or working in parallel?
- Do the "rules" create and promote interaction?
- Are students allowed to talk to each other and physically help each other?
- Do all students participate and interact?
- Do all students learn?

Example of an activity:

• Cooperative Concentration: Each group has three or four members. The groups of children play together, taking turns, trying to make matches with their cards (cards can be typical Concentration Game cards, pictures, colors, spelling words and definitions, countries and states, etc.). Cards can be adapted for the student with dual sensory impairments or severe disabilities by adding braille or tactile cues, or enlarging the print.

The group members sit in a circle, hiding their cards. Player 1 walks around the circle and calls upon two other players to each reveal a card. The group agrees that the cards are (or are not) a match and if so, the match is put in the center of the circle. One member writes down on a piece of paper the answers. When all cards are in the center of the circle, the game is won. Adding a "beat the clock" component might increase excitment (e.g., 10 minutes to make as many matches as possible).

Social skills to emphasize include: the need to collaborate, share "memory" of who has which cards, help each other make matches, call each other by name, etc. *The roles can include:* recorder (the member who writes down the answers); timer (who makes sure everyone is working within 10 minute limit); dealer (who tells members to tum over cards); and the checker (who makes sure everyone is participating and understanding the game).

For additional information on cooperative learning strategies, refer to:

- Brandt, R. (1987). On cooperation in schools: A conversation with David and Roger Johnson. Educational Leadership, pp. 14-19.
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- Sapon-Shevin, M. (1978). Cooperative instructional games: Alternatives to the spelling bee. The Elementary School Journal, 79(2), p. 81-87.

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