5. Provide resource room/support personnel with specific expectations regarding the content and skills to be learned, the tasks to be completed, and the learning strategies/skills (i.e., organization, study skills, test taking skills) required for success.

Well, the research says…

(Susan has been most kind in giving permission to put her information at my site. Be sure to visit her site at http://www.resourceoom.net for up to date information and new articles for teachers and parents. If you are a teacher you should know that Susan is a highly qualified professional. If you are a parent, these tips may help you in suggesting strategies for your child's IEP or input for teachers if they appear stumped on strategies for your child. Thank you Susan, for your generosity in sharing.)

**Resource Room - Tips for a working model**

**Susan Jones, M. Ed. 2/99**

1. **Be Prepared.** Before you meet the students, examine their IEPS to figure out how you're going to meet their needs. This may mean being aggressive in being allowed to find out the students in your courses -- you are *not* a regular education teacher who knows that you'll be teaching "Physical Science" fourth period with a predetermined school system's curriculum. You cannot really plan anything until you've seen the individual needs of your students.

Take a good look at those IEPS. If three students with emotional problems need a place to unwind, it will be impossible for you to simultaneously
provide an "undistracting environment" for LD/ADD students to complete tests or assignments. If three different students need individual or small group remediation for different subjects, and the IEP states that each student will get "50 minutes a day" of that service, you may be overtaxed in your lesson planning and may find it hard to claim that you are complying with the IEP. Before it's December and you realize "things aren't working," anticipate these kinds of conflicts. Make room arrangements, paraprofessional schedule arrangements, student schedule or IEP changes, or other adjustments if need be.

2. Establish communication routines early and thoroughly. Connect with the students' other teachers, and get creative in figuring out a way to establish regular communication with a minimum burden on either of you. One of the great frustrations for a resource room teacher, the student and parents, is finding out that a student has done poorly in a class when it's too late to do anything about it. Don't hope that a system "will evolve," or assume that if you haven't heard anything, that everything is fine - even if the student tells you it is. Have a system in place and give the student positive feedback early, instead of waiting for something negative and reacting to it.

3. Be Proactive. Decide how you're going to evaluate student performance -- and tell them on the first day of class. Just as the IEP has "measurable progress," insist that your students learn and do measurable things in your class. Provide a chart for weekly or daily grades and do what it takes to make sure that your students are getting something out of resource class -- and can see what they've gotten.

3. Be Provocative. Expect your students to learn from school. Some of your students will be very adept at avoiding responsibility; many have very low expectations. If you can't make the connection through their regular classes, provide other things for them to learn in your class.

4. Avoid the "enabling" trap. "Matthew effect" is the phrase used to describe how students with mild handicaps get further and further behind their peers, as "the rich get richer, the poor get poorer." Resource rooms, unfortunately, can aggravate this tendency. When a student is being 'helped' through assignments and tests, and not held accountable for actually learning the material in them, then only the appearance of learning


is happening. Other students will be learning content from that same assignment and integrating what they learn into what they already know. Too often the "helped" student learns that school is a place to make people think you're doing what they want you to, that other people learn but you don't, and that you need to be shepherded through your classes. Often, assignments can be creatively modified to make them meaningful, without simply reducing the quantity of work involved.

5. Avoid the "give them a fish" trap. Teachers in middle and secondary school often assume that if a student hasn't learned basic skills in reading and math by that point, that it's not worth investing any more time in learning those skills. The student may be assigned to the resource room to compensate for the reading the student is assumed to be unable to acquire. This is a gross injustice to the child. Middle school students, high school students, and adults have been successfully taught to read.

Unfortunately, the older the student, the more intensive the program needed and the longer it will take to make gains. It's highly unlikely that this instruction can be successfully accomplished in a resource room setting. If the primary barrier to a student's success in other classes is a specific skill, especially in middle school, then placement in the resource room may not be appropriate, although it is common. Meeting with the parent(s) and others on the IEP team and finding a way to teach the student those skills can be the difference between a future college graduate and a future illiteracy statistic.

Learning Activities for the Resource Room

These activities are for students who "don't have nothin'" or are "going to study." Depending on just how much structure the students require, you may assign point levels to various tasks (which can be individually adjusted) so that the student knows how much s/he has to complete to achieve a certain grade on a daily (or more frequently if necessary) or weekly basis. If students keep an ongoing notebook of their resource room work, they can see progress, especially if they do a lot of work in one area.

Learn to study. Instead of "looking at notes," there are many active ways to study. Student can be graded on things such as illustrated flashcards for words they're learning, or paraphrased notes, or oral quizzes
on the material they reviewed, especially if you can give a quiz after fifteen minutes of active studying. The Study Skills Database from Muskingum College has many, many ideas.

**Practice basic skills.** That doesn't sound too exciting, but often students would pick out one of my "basic Math review" sheets -- and since they couldn't do the same sheet twice, they ended up doing progressively more challenging work but staying at their "comfort level." A good secondary spelling program can also help -- if a student learns the "i before e" rule all of his teachers may thank you!

**Learn something else of interest.** Some students will work on an independent 'project' in a subject of interest -- especially if they are provided with structure and feedback throughout the process. You could even find out in advance about upcoming projects and give the student the chance to get a jump on assignments that can otherwise be overwhelming. I have had students who decided they wanted to learn all the states and capitals, and scheduled the number they were expected to learn each day; others used blank maps and atlases to learn where countries were. Another student did an extensive report on the nine planets - that wasn't copied from the encyclopedia. It's amazing what students will do when they have choices and expectations.

**Learn to keyboard.** Keyboarding is a tangible, marketable skill and one that can be learned relatively independently. Odds are reasonably good that there's at least one old typewriter or computer suitable for learning to keyboard somewhere in your building or school system. [http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/technology/product_list/keyboarding_skills.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/technology/product_list/keyboarding_skills.html) lists many keyboarding programs (software and book form) and products which have been used successfully with people with learning disabilities and/or motor skills challenges.

**Learn from commercial comprehension materials.** There are many, many products designed to appeal to "at risk" or "reluctant" readers. Be aware, though, that often the reading levels of these materials is still beyond the independent reading levels of your students. Don't add to the humiliation by giving a student "special" materials -- that they still can't read. Look for materials that actively engage the students. Weekly Reader has an "Extra" magazine for middle and secondary special needs students that has many activities and interesting articles.
A possible presentation sequence.
The information presented below takes about fifteen hours of instruction time, not including the finals exam preparation class. The general topics listed here are followed by the key concepts included in each topic. In using the following sequence for planning your lessons, of course, adapt the quantity and depth of information you present to the needs of the students you are working with, their grade level, and the amount of time you have for presenting it. Begin the first class session with personal introductions, an outline of the presentation of skills, class rules, and a rapport-building discussion. The rest of the classes might follow this pattern:

• Organization Sessions: How to organize a locker, how to set up a home study area; how to follow a routine for home study. Setting up a notebook system, using a file box and supply tote, and how to organize study time.

• Learning Styles Sessions: Include assessments on learning modalities, personality temperaments and left brain/right brain learning.

• Study Strategies Sessions: Include the ones used at school and at home.
(see the Williams article in this issue)

• Finals Session: Go over steps to prepare for final exams, write out the plan.
Memory Strategies: Teach several mnemonic devices during the course.

TEACHING STUDY SKILLS AND LEARNING STRATEGIES TO THERAPISTS, TEACHERS, AND TUTORS

How to Give Help and Hope to Disorganized Students by Diane Newton

Reprinted with permission from the International Dyslexia Association quarterly newsletter, Perspectives, Winter, 2003 vol. 29, No. 1, Diane Newton. It's worth joining IDA just to get Perspectives - each issue has many articles like this. Their website is http://www.interdys.org.)

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Becoming a Study Coach:
The Background

Becoming a study coach requires studying. Whenever possible, teachers, therapists, and tutors should take college courses and continuing education programs or at least attend workshops and lectures on teaching study and organization skills. A good program for learning how to teach study and organization and learning strategies should be just as structured and as sequential as the curriculum for teaching any other school subject because "structured teaching… unites the teacher and student in a learning partnership by providing informed, explicit, and
inter-active instruction" (Deshler et al, 1996). If courses and lectures are not accessible, there are many well-written study skills books on the market. Some good ones include *How to Study in College* by Walter Pauk, *How to Study* by Ron Fry, *Improve Your Grades* by Veltisezar Bautista, *Learning To Learn* by Gloria Frender, *The How to Study Book* by Alan Brown, "Organization and Study Skills" by Claire Nissenbaum in *Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills*. The Internet is also an excellent source for study skills information. Many universities have websites to help their own students, but the information is available to everyone.

**To teach a course on organization and study skills, the demonstration samples should include:**

**File box:** This is to show students how and where to store schoolwork at home. One of the best is a file box with a latch and handle for easy portability, the dimensions being roughly 11" x 14". The box should be set up with at least five hanging folders (i.e., one for each potential class) labeled in the order of an "example" student's class schedule. Place six manila folders in each hanging folder, one for each grading period (or four if the student has nine-week reporting periods). Students then will be able to see where to put all their papers from a single reporting period.

**Supply Box:** This can be something like a tackle box. It should contain examples of all the potential supplies a student will need for studying at home and the box and contents should be things the student could easily
purchase Items such as pens, pencils, pencil sharpener, three-hole punch, stapler, staples, Post-It Notes and Flags, etc. or anything else students may need when they sit down to study. The supply box helps students keep everything close-by, fosters attention to the study tasks at hand, and thereby shortens study time since they will not need to leave the study area to "find" something.

• **Three-ring Demonstration Binder:** This will serve as a "show and tell" model of how school notebooks can be set up. Although some schools have students use multiple binders, a one-notebook binder system helps everyone, disorganized students in particular, reduce the number of items they must keep up with on a daily basis. When students carry one notebook, they feel less fragmented because they do not have to keep up with a myriad of items.

• ...*all students need a well-designed, thorough organization and study skills program that presents the essential skills and motivates students to make use of them.*

Occasionally teachers want students to have additional spirals and folders. If so, these items can be hole punched and added behind the appropriate subject division in the notebook. The suggested order of the demonstration notebook is as follows:

**A metal ringed zipper bag.** Metal is best because it lasts longer.
A calendar planner. This should have two types of pages, a week-at-a-glance for recording daily assignments and a month-at-a-glance for planning for future tests, papers and projects as well as the student's social and family activities. See the Jenks article in this issue for additional suggestions about how these can be used.

A double-sided pocket folder. One side labeled "homework to be done, papers to be signed" and the other side labeled "graded work." During class, graded homework is placed in the back pocket of the folder and then filed behind the correct tab in the notebook during the home study time.

Two sets of colored tabbed dividers. Separate the sets and match the colors (e.g., two reds together, the two blues together, and so on). One tab will be labeled with the title of the particular subject (e.g., Science, Math, etc.). This section is for daily work and notes. The other tab will be one labeled "tests" or "quizzes." This way, students can quickly find their old tests and have them available to study for tests or exams at the end of the grading period.

One set of clear tabbed dividers (optional) for additional subdivisions in a particular subject.

Notebook or "filler" paper

A student dictionary and/or thesaurus, preferably three-hole punched.
An expandable file folder, three-hole punched with an opening toward the binder rings. This will hold anything that might otherwise become a loose item (e.g., index cards, small paperback books, and so forth).

Study coaches may also want to put together additional notebooks that can show students alternative ways of organization. Since schools often require that students have multiple notebooks, students and their families need to know that the goal is to minimize the number of items students have to keep up with during a school day.

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