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## **A Handbook of Strategies for Serving Students with Special Needs in a General Classroom Setting**

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**A HANDBOOK OF STRATEGIES  
FOR SERVING STUDENTS  
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS  
IN A GENERAL CLASSROOM SETTING**

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**A Project Report  
Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington University**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education**

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**by  
Susan E. Carthum  
July 1997**

A HANDBOOK OF STRATEGIES  
FOR SERVING STUDENTS  
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS  
IN A GENERAL CLASSROOM SETTING

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The purpose of this project was to design and develop a handbook of strategies for serving students with special needs in a general classroom setting at Green Mountain Elementary School. To accomplish this purpose, a review of current literature and research related to special education and related instructional and behavioral strategies for elementary level students was conducted. Additionally, information and materials related to instructional and behavioral strategies used in the Central Kitsap School district was integrated into the project.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my husband Mike for his support and patience while I worked on my Master's degree and this project. I would also like to thank my family for believing I could complete this project, even when I put it on hold.

The writer also wishes to thank Dr. Jack McPherson for his help and guidance in completing this project. In addition, I would like to thank Jenny Paulson, my team partner, for helping develop and use many of these strategies in our classroom.

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## CHAPTER 3

### PROCEDURES OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of the project was to design and develop a handbook of instructional and behavioral strategies for serving students with special needs in a general classroom setting. To accomplish this purpose, a review of current literature and research related to special education and related instructional and behavioral strategies for elementary students was conducted. A hand search of various other sources was also conducted.

Chapter 3 contains background information describing:

1. Need for the Project
2. Development of Support for the Project
3. Procedures
4. Planned Implementation and Assessment

#### Need for the Project

The need for the project was influenced by the following considerations:

1. The writer, (Susan E. Carthum), a certified classroom teacher at Green Mountain Elementary School, Central Kitsap School

District, has been working with students with special needs since 1991 and searching for ways to best serve them in the classroom.

2. Undertaking this study afforded an opportunity to review in-depth, current research related to strategies for serving students with special needs.
3. Research has provided abundant information in developing a handbook of strategies.
4. Undertaking this project coincided with the writer's graduate studies in educational administration at Central Washington University.

#### Development of Support for the Project

For six years the writer has served students with special needs in a general classroom setting. She discussed the need for a handbook of strategies with several of her colleagues at Green Mountain Elementary School, and they encouraged her to develop such a handbook. Support for a handbook was also provided by:

1. Jenny Paulson - Intermediate Support Specialist, Green



## Mountain Elementary School

### 2. Greg Cleven - Principal, Green Mountain Elementary

Additionally, the writer was invited to do a workshop on instructional and behavioral strategies at the Charge, an annual conference sponsored by the Central Washington University Chapter of the Student Council for Exceptional Children. This project provided an opportunity to further develop strategies introduced at the Charge.

### Procedures

To obtain background information essential for developing a handbook of strategies, an Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) computer search was conducted. A hand-search of selected items was also undertaken. Additionally, information and materials related to instructional and behavioral strategies utilized in the Central Kitsap School District was used.

### Planned Implementation and Assessment of the Project

Strategies developed in the handbook presented in Chapter 4 of this project will be periodically reviewed by participating team teaching partners and faculty members. In the event the model is used in an

inservice training program, input will be invited from participants.

Modifications resulting from dialogue may be made at the discretion of the writer and participating team members.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PROJECT

The handbook of strategies developed for use with students with special needs in grades four through six at Green Mountain Elementary School, which was the subject of this project, has been presented in Chapter four in four sections:

Section 1 - Setting the Tone of the Classroom

Section 2 - Instructional Strategies

Section 3 - Behavioral Strategies

Section 4 - Family Involvement

HANDBOOK OF STRATEGIES  
FOR SERVING STUDENTS  
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS  
IN A GENERAL CLASSROOM SETTING

Green Mountain Elementary School

Fourth through Sixth Grades

Susan Carthum, Teacher

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## **SECTION 1**

Setting the Tone for  
the School Year

## Setting the Tone for the School Year

### Introduction:

For strategies to be successful, a safe, positive environment must be established from the beginning of the school year. It must be an atmosphere where students are supportive and encourage each other to take risks without fear of ridicule. The following strategies can help establish an atmosphere conducive to learning by the students.\*

### Suggested Strategies:

1. At the beginning of the school year, develop rules with students.

Discuss each one, role play and make sure each student understands each rule. When this is accomplished, have each student sign the rules and post in a prominent place in the classroom. Refer back to them constantly. For example, a teacher might ask a student, what rule are you following (or not following) right now?

2. Develop a rapport with students. Use humor.

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\* In sections 1 through 4, unless otherwise stated, strategies described were used by the writer and her teaching partner.

3. Talk with students about the fact that everyone has different abilities.

Be open about the fact that students will do different amounts and kinds of work depending on their capabilities.

4. Make sure students know that you like them. Have lots of opportunities to let students know when they have done something well.

5. Discuss consequences for appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

Make sure rewards are random.



## **SECTION 2**

### **Instructional Strategies**

## Instructional Strategies

### Introduction:

A large assortment of instructional strategies is necessary for any classroom. Students served in a general classroom setting benefit from use of a variety of strategies. The following instructional strategies can help students succeed in learning.

### Suggested Strategies:

1. Preferential seating: Student with a learning disability is seated next to an academically strong, willing to help student. Student with a behavioral disability is seated next to an appropriate role model.
2. Popcorn reading: After a student reads part of a text orally, the student says "popcorn". The reader then calls on another student to read. Since all students are expected to follow along, they either begin reading, or say "pass" while pointing to the word at which the previous student stopped. Students choose the amount they read. Fledging oral readers may choose to read only a few words, while more confident readers may read several paragraphs.

3. Color coded class name cards: Using three to four different colored note cards, one card for each student, put all students with special needs on cards of one color, put names of students who have not mastered skill of working with others on another color, students who work well with difficult students on another color, and people who work well with low readers and writers on another. This way, when you pick names to work in pairs or groups, it looks random, but really is not.
  
4. Partner read: Reading partners are formed either by student choice or teacher choice. They choose a spot in the room to read quietly to one another. It is sometimes good to team a strong reader with a weak reader, especially when reading in the content areas. At other times, however, student choice of partner is appropriate. In either case, partner reading provides oral reading opportunities.
  
5. Reading conferences: While the rest of the class reads silently, meet with individual students to discuss the book the student is reading, model reading for the student, and listen to the student read. Comprehension questions are asked during this time. Volunteers may be used to provide more opportunities for practice for students.

6. Books on tape: Provide taped literature books that students are required or are interested in reading. This is useful when book reports are assigned to the class. Students are required to follow along in the book as they are listening. This allows students to raise their reading levels and allows students to read a book that is appropriate for their interest level.
7. Tests and assignments, that are not assessing reading, are read to the student as needed. This provides a more accurate assessment of what the student has learned.
8. Study guides: Provide study guides before tests. This helps students focus on what they need to master for the test. Let parents know when study guides are coming home either by phone calls to them or by leaving a message on the school's voice mail.
9. Dictation: Students who have difficulty recording ideas on paper are offered the option of dictating their assignments to the teacher or assistant. This allows for more creative writing and prevents a feeling of frustration by the student.

10. Assignment modification: Assignments are shortened for some students so they get practice without feeling overwhelmed.
11. Have visual displays to help students with comprehension (Bender & Vail 1995).
12. Homework: To help students complete homework, start the assignment in class, let students know consequences of not finishing homework, let them know what happens if they complete homework (Fritz & Miller, 1995).
13. Let students respond in alternative ways. For example, orally instead of written (Fritz & Miller, 1995).
14. "Use cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and other group work" (Pearce, 1996, p. 83). For example, one child reads, another records.
15. Highlight important sections of textbooks. This helps students find important sections.

## **SECTION 3**

### **Behavioral Strategies**

## Behavioral Strategies

### Introduction

A critical element of a successful classroom is teachers' expectations of students' behavior. It is imperative that all students behave in a way that allows learning to occur. The following strategies can be used to help students learn to behave appropriately.

### Suggested Strategies:

1. Remember that students do not automatically know how to behave.  
They have to be taught.
2. Do not hold a grudge. Students need to know they are forgiven.
3. Recognize the positives.
4. Give special jobs to students. They love to help.
5. Say what the correct behavior is, give a time limit, and then walk away.

6. Have a quiet place for student having problems to go. For example, a private part of the classroom or another classroom (Pearce, 1996).
7. Give students random rewards that are not expected. Some examples are computer time, phone call or note home, free recess, extra teacher read-aloud time or social time.
8. Make consequences as mild as possible. For example, for throwing paper a student might need to pick up paper on the floor in classroom.
9. Handle situations calmly. Students look to teachers to see how they react.
10. Follow through. Do not make empty threats.
11. "When a child is disruptive, look for patterns" (Pearce, 1996, p. 84).  
A child is communicating when he/she behaves inappropriately. Look at patterns: What time of day is it? What was happening in the environment? What was I, the teacher, doing?



## **SECTION 4**

### **Family Involvement**

## Family Involvement

### Introduction

Involving families in their child's education encourages cooperation and communication between schools and families. The following are just a few of the strategies educators can use to encourage families to become involved.

### Suggested Strategies:

1. Make positive contacts with parents. Unfortunately, many parents of students with behavioral disabilities only expect to hear from school when their child has done something "bad".
2. Welcome parents into the classroom. Parents are often willing to volunteer to work with students, do clerical work, be chaperones for field trips, or help plan parties.
3. Have family night so parents have the opportunity to do something fun at school with their child. For example, have a pumpkin carving, make gingerbread houses, make old-fashioned valentines or have an ice cream social.

4. Produce a classroom newsletter to keep families informed of classroom activities.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this project was to design and develop a handbook of strategies for serving students with special needs in a general classroom setting. A review of current literature and research related to special education and related strategies was conducted to help accomplish this purpose. Additionally, a hand search of various other items was also conducted. Also information and materials related to instructional and behavioral strategies utilized in the Central Kitsap School District was integrated into the project.

#### Conclusions

Conclusions reached as a result of this project were:

1. Teachers need a wide range of instructional and behavioral strategies to help students with special needs be successful in a general classroom setting.

2. Collaborative teaching helps students with special needs be successful in the general classroom by allowing general and special educators to work together.
3. To help them implement these strategies into the classroom, teachers need support and training.

### Recommendations

As a result of this project, the following recommendations have been suggested:

1. To help students with special needs in a general classroom setting, teachers should be provided with a collection of instructional and behavioral strategies.
2. To help students with special needs be successful, collaboration between special and general educators should be encouraged.
3. School districts should offer support to teachers as schools move more toward serving students with special needs in the general classroom setting.

4. Other school districts seeking to provide a resource of instructional and behavioral strategies to teachers may wish to use the handbook developed for this project, or conduct more research on this subject to meet their unique needs.