Inquiry Unit Project:  David Steward

Step # 1: David Steward

1. Given the background information available on David, how would you characterize David’s general ability? How do you know?

David’s grades deteriorated from kindergarten to first grade. He was referred for testing by his first grade teacher to determine if perceptual problems were blocking his ability to succeed academically. Results indicated he was “not” a candidate for special education.

David’s WISC-R at CA 6.10 indicated his verbal (intellectual reasoning power) VIQ =131 which puts him at the 98 percent level, his performance PIQ=100 which puts him at the 50 percent level and his full scale FSIQ=118. IQ scores between 90-110 are considered “average range”. David scored high in the VIQ and average in the PIQ.

David struggles with comprehending what he hears and reads. He is able to read the words and demonstrates strong work attack skills, but is unable to answer questions about the text he has just read. David also appears to not understand what he is told at times. He has trouble following conversations with friends and becomes frustrated and distracted. David’s second grade teacher indicated he had noticed problems with following directions and distractibility, but due to lack of development in reading skills, he was wasn’t able to notice comprehension difficulties.

His test scores indicate a strong level of verbal (intellectual reasoning power), but there is quite a discrepancy between his VIQ and PIQ scores.

Comprehension, maintaining interest and focused attention seem to be predominant areas of concern. Difficulties with class work seem to be having a negative impact on his behavior according to his conduct grade (D+).

2. What would a new WISC-R assessment add in terms of useful information for you as the teacher?
Updated test scores would offer a means of comparison regarding strengths and weaknesses. Did scores change or remain the same. This could help determine a plan of action regarding David’s education.

3. **Suppose you discover that David’s older sibling has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. What, if any, educational implications would this have?**

Is ADD hereditary? I researched, but couldn’t find any conclusive answers regarding this question. I do know several families who have multiple members with ADD. I wouldn’t use this information alone to determine ADD to be hereditary—I need conclusive validation from professionals. I would take information regarding other siblings into consideration though. It could prove helpful to find out what successful measures have been implemented (if any) for the older sibling. Is medication involved? Was it a consideration? Finding out the family’s viewpoint regarding ADD would be beneficial in determining the home support David (and I) would receive.

I certainly wouldn’t, however, pass any preconceived judgments on to David based on sibling history. I believe in individuality and the importance of determining what is best for each student and their individual situation.

**Background Information on LD and ADHD**

A problem analysis needs to be determined so a plan of action can be implemented. Would David be considered LD? The term “specific learning disabilities” represents a heterogeneous group of students who, despite adequate cognitive functioning and the ability to learn some skills and strategies relatively quickly and easily, have great difficulty learning other skills and strategies (text, page 37). Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities (text, page 38). Essentially there is a severe discrepancy between the student’s achievement and intellectual ability (how they think and how they perform).

We know that David is able to read words and demonstrates strong work attack skills, but he struggles with comprehension and is unable to answer questions about the text. There are also contrasting scores between his VIQ and PIQ scores. Considering the previous gathered information, here are some key strategies for teaching students with LD:

- Control task difficulty
- Teaching students with LD in small interactive groups of six or fewer students
- Using a combination of direct instruction and cognitive strategy instruction
- Providing a framework for learning
Many students with LD also demonstrate attention problems (text, page 52). The next step is to consider attention deficit disorder (ADD). Research studies provide compelling evidence that ADHD is a true disorder (Barkley, 1998; McBurnett et al., 1993; National Institute of Mental Health, 2000). According to the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has two distinct factors:

1. **Inattention** which refers to consistent (over six months) and highly inappropriate levels of at least six of the following behaviors:

   - Failing to pay close attention to details and making careless mistakes that are inconsistent with the child’s development
   - Failing to sustain attention to tasks and/or play activities
   - Failing to listen, even when spoken to directly
   - Failing to complete tasks
   - Having difficulty with organization
   - Resisting working on tasks that require sustained attention
   - Losing materials and objects
   - Becoming easily distracted
   - Being forgetful

2. **Hyperactivity-impulsivity** refers to consistent (over six months) and highly inappropriate levels of at least six of the following behaviors:

   - Fidgeting or squirming
   - Having a difficult time remaining seated during class
   - Running or climbing excessively at inappropriate times
   - Having difficulty playing quietly
   - Acting as though he or she is “driven by a motor”
   - Talking too much

   **Impulsivity**
   - Blurt out answers
   - Difficulty waiting for his/her turn
   - Interrupting others or butting into activities
These characteristics of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity should be present before the age of 7 and in two or more separate settings (example: at school and at home)—text, page 53.

A number of rating scales have been developed specifically for the identification of ADHD. Two frequently used scales are Conners Teachers Rating Scale (Conners, 1989) and the ADHD—Rating Scale—IV (DuPaul, Power, Anatopoulos, & Reid, 1998).

Because students with ADHD are likely to spend all or most of their school time in general classroom setting (Fowler, 1992), much of their educational program is likely to be the responsibility of the classroom teacher. Here are some instructional guidelines and accommodations for students with attention deficit disorder:

Important teacher characteristics
*Positive attitudes toward inclusion of students with ADHD
*Ability to collaborate as a member of an interdisciplinary team.
*Knowledge of behavior-management procedures
*Personal characteristics such as understanding, compassion, patience, concern, respect, responsiveness, sense of humor, etc...

Educational Interventions
*Use novelty in instruction and directions
*Maintain a schedule
*Prepare students for transitions and provide support in completing transitions.
*Emphasize time limits (teach students to plan ahead)
*Provide organizational assistance (provide guidelines for how to maintain desks, materials, and schedules)
*Provide rewards consistently and often
*Be brief and clear (provide brief and organized instructions)
*Arrange the environment to facilitate attention (minimize distractions)
*Provide optimal stimulation
*Allow for movement and postures other than sitting (include movement in activities)

Homework guidelines
*Keep homework assignments separate from unfinished classwork
*Use homework as practice for material that has already been taught
*Identify the minimum amount to demonstrate learning (shorten task)
*Provide timelines for tasks associated with long-term assignments (help problem-solve a timeline for completing key components of assignment)

A primary focus of a teacher should be adapting instruction according to the needs of the student. Since sitting still and focusing for long periods of time can be difficult for many children but especially those with ADHD, a teacher should incorporate structured transition periods where students are able to move about the room to visit with classmates or do activities. It is important to remember that whether a student is LD, ADD or
ADHD, children are diversified learners. Each student should be evaluated and accommodated individually.

Step #2: Problem Analysis and Instructional Plan of Action

David has problems with comprehension, following directions and conversations, and distractibility. He rushes through assignments, rarely volunteers, his confidence is low and he is becoming increasingly resistant to do schoolwork as well as returning homework assignments.

Goals:

1. Increase comprehension and understanding of material covered by implementing and teaching strategies for learning. I feel this is important because the lack of confidence David is feeling in his work is carrying into his daily seatwork as well as his homework. Proper strategies and skills will hopefully boost his confidence and desire to learn and do his work. Many times frustration and lack of confidence are key elements involved when a student lacks desire to learn or put forth schoolwork effort. This is evident is David’s case as he rushes through his seatwork, rarely volunteers to answer questions in class, assumes he’ll do the wrong work even before he starts and his increasing resistant attitude toward doing schoolwork and turning in homework.

2. Increase David’s ability to follow directions and limit his distractibility. This will be accomplished through teaching effective strategies and accommodating the environment. The inability to stay focused and become easily distracted enhances David’s difficulties in learning and lessens his desire to contribute and be successful in class.

3. Increase David’s participation in class and homework return rate. David’s lack of participation in class and homework turn in reflects his attitude toward himself and school. These two variables need to be addressed in order to increase his confidence and desire to learn.

The following will need to be considered:

*Instructional Arrangements
—How is class organized for instruction, group arrangements, expected behaviors during group instruction, materials used, David’s physical position in classroom, David’s behavior during direct instruction in groups and independent seatwork, David’s performance in group activities, specific aids or types of assistance that seem beneficial, how is performance evaluated and what does David do when he can’t do a task?

*Seatwork Management
—How will David indicate he needs help on assignment, how will feedback on assignments be provided, how does David perform during independent work periods and what does he do when he has difficulty on assigned seatwork tasks?

*Behavior Management—What are classroom rules and are they posted, how is classroom management system organized and managed, what consequences occur when David rushes through seatwork and doesn’t turn in homework?

*Instruction:  (What and How)
--What instructional materials are used for David in specific subject area of concern and what are the materials selection/adaptations for David?
How will David be taught to read/write/solve problems, using what instructional approach, specific modes of learning David seems to prefer, what grouping arrangements will be used and does this arrangement change daily?

*Incentives
--What happens if David fails to perform adequately or demonstrates successful performance, what incentives and type of motivation will be used?

Instructional Activities/Behavioral Strategies to achieve goals

1. Increase Comprehension

Understanding is the ultimate goal of reading. For many students, however, reading the words is not enough to make understanding happen (text, page 366). Consequently, instruction should include the direct teaching (e.g., Mastropieri &Scrugss, 1997; Swanson, 1999; Gerstan et al., 2001) of the following:


The following teaching techniques focus on teaching comprehension strategies and comprehension monitoring can be used with a variety of texts:

*K-W-L Strategy—a strategy to help students become actively engaged in comprehension before, during, and after reading (Ogle, 1986).

*Question-Answer Relationships Strategy (QAR)—helps students realize that when answering questions, they need to not only consider the text and their prior knowledge, but also use strategic behavior to adjust the use of each of these sources (Raphael, 1982, 1984, 1986).

*Story Retelling—actively involves students in the reconstruction of stories they have read or heard. Retelling stories not only enhances comprehension but also benefits
the students by acquiring a sense of story structure, recall of details is enhanced, oral language and vocabulary are improved, and peer interaction and student involvement are promoted (Morrow, 1985; Pellegrini & Galda, 1982).

*Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR)—is a multicomponent learning strategy that combines essential reading comprehension strategies that have been demonstrated as effective in improving students’ understanding of text (Palincsar, 1985; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994) with cooperative learning groups or paired learning. The four steps involved in CSR are: Previewing, Click and Clunk, Get the Gist, and Wrap Up. Once students have developed proficiency in applying the comprehension strategies through teacher-led activities, the students learn to use CSR in peer-led cooperative learning groups of about four or five students (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

*Text Highlighting—students with comprehension problems have difficulty sifting out important information. Underlining or highlighting key points in the textbooks can help students attend to the most salient information (Wood & Wooley, 1986). Students should be taught how to highlight and identify key information on their own.

*Buddy System—establish a responsible “peer buddy” with David who will be a positive influence. This buddy will help review and reinforce directions, assignments, and expectations.

2. Lessen Distractibility and increase ability to follow directions

*Communicating High Expectations—for students to be able to accomplish expectations desired expectations must be communicated clearly, explicitly, and repeatedly. Specific clarity regarding expectations needs to be addressed in the following areas:
*Classroom rules, *Student’s roles and responsibilities, *What they will learn, *Following directions for completing assignments, and *Quantity and quality of process and product.

*Creating a Positive Classroom Climate—teachers who are successful in working with a wide range of academic and social needs develop a classroom atmosphere that is both compassionate and productive. Three key factors are critical to creating such a climate: caring, order, and coordination (text, page 325). An orderly, businesslike classroom environment that focuses on productivity is especially helpful to students at risk. Knapp, Turnbull & Shields (19901) explain that classroom environments that enable students to learn have the following common characteristics:
*Minimal disruptions, *Pacing of instruction appropriate for the topic and for the students, Consistent classroom routines, *Regular systems for giving feedback to students, *Systematic ways to keep students accountable for their work and *Planning of instructional assignments and tasks appropriate for students’ level of learning.
*Educational Interventions*

--Highlight important instructions and key points with colored pens, highlight markers, or felt tip pens. Put key information in boldface or underline it. Use oral cuing to identify key words or ideas in directions.

--Maintain a schedule

--Alert students to upcoming transitions and provide guidance and encouragement as transitions are completed.

--Provide brief and clear instructions presented in a well-organized manner.

--Arrange environment to facilitate David’s attention. Consider who might help promote good organizational skills. Is David in close proximity for constant teacher viewing and monitoring to allow for feedback and cues.

--Allow for periodic breaks and movement.

Ultimately, David needs to be provided with an environment where the expectations are clear and reinforced, disruptions are kept to a minimum, directions are highlighted and repeated, he is positioned within the classroom to facilitate optimal learning, periodic movement is incorporated, and guided transitions are provided.

3. Increase Class Participation and Homework return

--Unfinished class work should remain in class. This will help David differentiated between class work and homework and help to minimize the possibility of him becoming overwhelmed.

--Decrease the amount of homework for David. The goal should be quality of understanding and mastering the task/skill, as opposed to quantity of how “much” he did and the focus should remain on encouraging him to complete and turn in his work.

--Have a discussion with David regarding his participation and establish a “signal” to indicate either his understanding (or lack of) as well as the teacher’s desire for his participation.

--Help David problem-solve and establish a timeline for completing key components of assignments. Establishing David as the one with the power will hopefully positively impact his desire to participate and complete assignments independently.
--Involve Parent in homework assignments. Establish weekly correspondence between home and school, which contains assignment information. Signatures would ensure all parties are viewing the correspondence.

--Break students into pairs or small groups for projects and assignments to encourage more active participation from David.

--Have an established buddy who reviews homework assignments with David.

**Step #3: Plan of Action for assessing the success of the program**

*WISC-R*—new assessment to measure progress and compare to previous assessment

*Informal Reading Inventories*—to determine the independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels of David to gain insight into the decoding and comprehension strategies he uses when he reads. This assessment will be used to monitor and follow David’s progress.

*Curriculum-based Measurement (CBM)*—to measure David’s progress and highlight the close tie between curriculum and student performance. CBM has been used successfully in general education classrooms to increase word recognition, reading fluency, and reading comprehension (e.g., Fuchs et al., 1994, 2000; Mathes et al., 1998).

*Assessment Portfolios*—collections of work samples that document David’s progress (examples: student interviews, self-assessments, diagnostic tests, achievement tests, teacher-made tests, personal reading and writing records, peer assessments, interest and attitude inventories, copies of passages read fluently, contributions from parents, report cards, observation checklists, etc…)

*Observations*—observing David’s daily accomplishments, struggles, attitude, behavior, interactions, participation, etc… and keeping a file of notated observations.

*Homework file*—to record David’s progress in submitting assignments

*Conferences*—a brief daily meeting with David to review goals and expectations and to provide feedback. Weekly conferences with his mother (either in person, by phone, via correspondence, email—whatever is successful) to maintain open lines of communication between home and school.

*Teacher-made Tests*—to monitor David’s comprehension progress. (80% or above accuracy expected).

*Self-Evaluation*—allow David to monitor and record his own progress
Step #4: Cover Sheet (demographic data, knowledge gained and attitude change)

Name: Tami Vollmar
Student Name: David Steward
Student Age: 8 years old
Student Grade: 3rd
Retentions: Yes:
No: Recommendation of first grade teacher for following year because of limited academic progress. David was referred for testing and results indicated he was not a candidate for special education. Immediate placement in a multi-grade classroom was recommended.

Student Disability or Special Need: ADD, LD (specific learning disability)

Brief description of the problem to be addressed: David has an average IQ, but has problems comprehending what he hears and reads. He has trouble following directions and conversations and becomes easily distracted. He rushes through seatwork, rarely participates in class, lacks confidence in his abilities and tends to not turn in his homework.

1. Please describe the knowledge you have gained about: (a) students/parents, (b) teaching/adapting subject matter and (c) collaboration/co-teaching by doing this project and taking this course.

(a) One of the most important things I learned is that students are diverse learners and different strategies and approaches must be implemented to reach all students. A parent can be a wonderful asset. No one knows a child more intimately than a parent and his or her information, insight, and knowledge can be helpful to teachers. It is important to keep communication lines open between home and school. (b) It is a teacher’s responsibility to be aware of his/her students needs. Student needs are best met when a teacher is able to recognize when adaptations and accommodations are necessary and implementations occur. Teachers must be flexible, open-minded, and willing to make changes in instruction, strategies, and approaches as situations arise. This may not always be an easy task, but it is a necessary one. (c) The most valuable insight I gained regarding collaboration/co-teaching from this course is that “two heads are better than one”. Collaboration involves direct interaction between two or more parties who voluntarily engage in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal (text, page 243). Co-teaching is defined as two or more professionals jointly delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space (text, page 243). Having two professionals working together toward a common goal can, when done appropriately and effectively, benefit students immensely. As I previously stated, I believe two perspectives can offer a greater range in knowledge, insight, strategies, approaches, etc… A key factor involved is the ability for the teachers to work together cohesively for their instruction to be as
effective as possible. Respect, communication, and flexibility are important ingredients in this working relationship.

2. Also, please tell us how you think your beliefs, attitudes, dispositions about working with students with disabilities have changed over the course of the semester and what readings, activities, discussions, have influenced or impacted you. Prior to taking this course, I didn’t have the knowledge or understanding of disabilities. It was important for me to build a foundation of terms and definitions in order to begin to understand how to utilize and implement strategies and approaches effectively. Previously, I didn’t have the knowledge or confidence to teach students with disabilities effectively. I really didn’t know “where to begin” in terms of classroom instruction. I realized I needed to change this ignorance and lack of skills I had before I began teaching again. I now know I was not effectively reaching ALL of my students in my previous years of teaching. This saddens and disappoints me, but I believe it is never too late to rectify a situation and that is what I have done in this course. I am more competent and confident regarding teaching students with disabilities. I am now equipped with the resources and tools necessary for effective instruction. I am aware of my responsibilities and I am also aware of and familiar with the professionals (peers) who are available to look to for guidance and support. It is a liberating feeling to know I have the tools, resources, knowledge, and capabilities to implement effective instruction to ALL students who come through my classroom. Teaching is a privilege and I owe it to my students to do the best job I possible can.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Professors Moxley and Shankland for all of your time, knowledge, expertise, experience, guidance and support. You have truly impacted me both personally and professionally. As an educator, making a difference is important to me. I wanted you to know that you have made a difference in my life. I hope my coursework throughout the semester has demonstrated how much more competent and confident I have become. It has been a wonderful growing experience! Best wishes to you both. You are making a difference in those you teach. I can attest to that!

Have a wonderful summer!

Tami Vollmar