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Getting Ready

As a teacher of students with multiple and significant disabilities, you will need to be prepared and organized for the school year. There are several things to do before students arrive that will help you feel ready. Foremost, it is important to understand the diverse abilities and needs of your students. Armed with this information, you can then locate materials and resources that will be useful for them. Furthermore, it will be critical to develop relationships within your school and surrounding community. Why not start now?

Chapter Outline

- Time Organization
- Student Information
- Finding Appropriate Materials and Adaptive Equipment
- Physical and Visual Arrangements Within the Room
- Helping Administrators, General Education Teachers, and Support Staff Understand the Needs and Abilities of Students
- Knowing Your Community

Time Organization

The list of things that need to be done during the school year is a long one. It includes individualized education programs (IEPs), meeting with and training

support staff, ongoing communication with parents, and planning instruction. Meanwhile, you have the important job of teaching and supporting your students. You might begin to wonder how you're going to accomplish all of this. Here are some strategies to consider that will help you more efficiently organize your time and complete your many tasks.

- ▶ As a special education teacher, you have a good deal of paperwork and responsibility that goes beyond preparation for teaching. So, finding a system to organize forms and paperwork is very important. Make this a system that works for you. The use of baskets, totes, or other compact containers is one good way to do this. Another way is developing a file or binder system. Consider using your desk or designating a shelf near your desk for these important containers or binders. If you put them on your desk, think about using stackable containers to avoid clutter and to ensure work space. Listed below are some ways to organize the information and to divide pertinent paperwork, forms, and materials so they are at your fingertips.
 - a. Things to complete today or for the week—This could include lesson plan materials, administrative or office requests, and so forth.
 - b. Calls to make or people to contact—This might include parents, teachers, support staff, administrators, or community contacts.
 - c. Academic activities and planning—This might include schedules, unit or lesson plans, ecological inventories, student profiles, IEPs-at-a-glance, copies of data sheets, and so forth. (See student information below.)
 - d. Student behavior or medical needs and procedures to follow—This might include behavior intervention plans and medical response plans for seizures, gastrostomy tubes (G-tubes), asthma, and so forth.
 - e. Important phone numbers—This could include agencies, administrators, support staff, therapist, individual student and family contact information, and so on.
- ▶ To save time in your busy day, make forms and templates that can be reproduced for continued use. Use lists with items that can be checked off or circled to save time rather than repeatedly writing tedious notes. Create forms for lessons, behavior, data collection for IEP objectives, and meetings. Using different-colored paper for the various forms or academic areas will make it easier for you to quickly access what you need. (See Figures 1.1, 1.2, and lesson plan data collection forms found in Chapter 2, Figures 2.7 and 2.8.) In addition, commercially made materials are available from a variety of vendors. See Figure 1.5 for a list of some of these.
- ▶ Also, develop a form to be completed by the general educators who teach your students that provides information and feedback on student progress or concerns for each week (see Figure 1.1). It is important to collaborate with general education staff to determine if the system that is developed is effective and not too time consuming. E-mail may be used to do this as well. Usually, special education teachers and support staff will remain with students with significant disabilities in the general education class. So face-to-face contact with staff can and should be used on a regular basis.
- ▶ Prioritize what needs to get done on a weekly basis. First, consider the ongoing communication and record keeping involved with individual student IEPs and

the needs that should be documented and monitored. As you develop your master schedule, time should be blocked out for these weekly tasks to be completed. (See Chapter 2, Figures 2.4 and 2.5, for ideas on how to do this.) Also, consider if there is a specific time when things can or must be done. For example, face-to-face communication with general education teachers might need to occur before or after school. Developing a checklist for these tasks is also helpful. Keep it handy on your desk where you'll be sure to see it, or post it on a bulletin board near your desk. It's always a good feeling to check off a task that has been completed.

- ▶ Decide on a consistent time to meet and touch base with your instructional support staff on a weekly basis. This time should be used to review student progress, and to discuss instructional strategies and materials and decide if any changes need to be made. It's important for instructional staff to share ideas and be valued as members of the team.
- ▶ Continue to look for ideas for materials and instructional strategies. Create resource files or plastic labeled containers for materials and instructional ideas so that you have them at your fingertips. It may be necessary to create your own student-specific materials, and establishing space for a workstation may be helpful for organizing materials. See Figure 1.3 for examples of what to include in such a center.

Student Information

Every student with multiple and significant disabilities has unique abilities. As teachers, it is our responsibility to facilitate the student's use of these abilities in academic and functional settings. Students should also develop new skills so they can live, work, and play in an integrated community as independently as possible. Our number one job is to be aware of our students' strengths and needs in order to facilitate learning. The following tasks will give you a head start.

- ▶ Contact people who are relevant to the student's life. This should include but is not limited to past teachers, parents or guardians, siblings, and therapists. Give these people time to share information about the student and his or her strengths and needs. Information you might want to elicit from them could include the student's likes and dislikes, special equipment needed or used, medical needs, specific teaching strategies that have been successful with learning and managing behaviors, and things that are rewarding and motivating for the student. A *family inventory* is a tool or process that helps to identify skills the student with multiple and significant disabilities will need to obtain in order to more fully participate with the family, neighbors, and friends in daily or weekly activities at home or in the community. A variety of approaches can be used to gather information from families including the following: Personal Futures Planning (O'Brien, 1987), Making Action Plans (MAPS, Menchetti & Sweeney, 1995), and the MAPS Process (Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint, & Rosenberg, 1997). Some educators develop a survey-type tool for the family to complete. Several domains are discussed in the family inventory. Some of these include personal profile, home life, community activities, work or chores, general education curriculum

Figure 1.1 Quick Feedback Form

<p>Student _____</p> <p>Class _____</p>	<p>Week of _____</p>																																				
<p>Please use this check-off or jot-down form to indicate how best I can assist the above student in your class. Please list any comments or concerns regarding student's progress.</p>																																					
<p>1. Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum/Content • IEP <p>2. Participation in Class</p> <p>3. Behavior</p> <p>4. Demands on Your Time</p> <p>5. Peer Connection</p> <p>6. Supports/Adaptations</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Meeting Expectations</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Not Meeting (No Progress)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">(Progress)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">(No Progress)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Active/Responsive</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Passive</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Manageable</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Unmanageable</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Reasonable</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Too Demanding</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Connected</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Isolated</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Effective</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Not Effective (Reevaluate)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</td> </tr> </table>	Meeting Expectations	Not Meeting (No Progress)	(Progress)	(No Progress)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	Active/Responsive		Passive		1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	Manageable		Unmanageable		1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	Reasonable		Too Demanding		1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	Connected		Isolated		1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	Effective		Not Effective (Reevaluate)		1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
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<p>Comments:</p>																																					
<p>If a support person is involved, should we consider fading out this support person or using him or her in a different way to support the class and all students?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES — If yes, how? _____</p>																																					

SOURCE: Adapted from *Wisconsin School Inclusion Project: Team Planning Packet* (1995).

Figure 1.2 IEP-at-a-Glance

←List Class/Activity From Schedule →																																																																																																																															
Student _____ Date/Semester _____																																																																																																																															
↓ Priority Goals/Objectives	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; height: 200px;"> <tr><td style="width: 45%; height: 30px;"></td><td style="width: 5%;"></td><td style="width: 5%;"></td><td style="width: 5%;"></td><td style="width: 5%;"></td><td style="width: 5%;"></td><td style="width: 5%;"></td><td style="width: 5%;"></td><td style="width: 5%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 30px;"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>																																																																																																																														

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Figure 1.3 Teacher Workstation for Creating Classroom Materials

Item	Strategies	Resources
Computer: Desktop or laptop with CD burner, CD/DVD player, and speakers	Create and store classroom materials and resources Access Web-based materials: News-2-You Reading A-Z The Wiz (free)	School or School District www.news-2-you.com www.readinga-z.com www.ablenetinc.com
Computer Software: BoardMaker Writing with Symbols PowerPoint	Picture Schedule Communication Adapt text Create electronic books	Mayer-Johnson www.mayer-johnson.com
Color Printer	Quickly print, and use pictures, lessons, books	School or district/office supply stores
Digital Camera	Picture schedules Communication aids Personalized books Labels for classroom materials Lesson review Student positioning	Home or office supply stores
CD Player iPod and speakers	Record or play music and audio books Individual or group use	Office supply stores www.apple.com
Foam Core	Schedules Templates Games	Office supply stores Craft or hobby stores
Velcro Sticky-back strips Sticky-back dots or coins	Schedules Communication aids Games	Mayer-Johnson www.mayer-johnson.com Sammons-Preston www.sammonspreston.com
Cardstock (multicolor)	Mounting for pictures/symbols/schedules	School office

SOURCE: Lisa Barczyk, 2007.

in an inclusive classroom, general education learning priorities, future hopes and dreams, functional needs and priorities, peer relationships, community assessment, and related service needs.

- ▶ The students' IEPs are the most important documents you will draft and refer to throughout the year. Keep them in a safe place, and check the school policies regarding individual students' records. The actual IEP document might need to be stored in a secure location. You should have all necessary IEPs on the first day of school. If you don't, inform the principal or special education

administrator in your building immediately. Specific information requiring close attention will include the following:

- a. Family members' or guardians' names and contact information (home and work phone numbers, emergency contact)
- b. Students' birth date, student ID number, IEP due date
- c. Particular behavior(s) and intervention strategies
- d. Medical needs, medication, or seizure disorder information, if applicable
- e. Physical disability or needs
- f. Transportation and other supplementary services or aides

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) requires that students with significant disabilities have annual goals and short-term objectives written in the IEP. Furthermore, IDEIA specifies that, for students with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards (in addition to the annual goals), a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives is required.

- ▶ Review the IEP and each student's annual goals and objectives. Develop an IEP-at-a-glance such as the one in Figure 1.2 that can be kept on your desk in a binder or someplace you devise to organize forms and other information. The amount of time students should be included in general education, any special equipment needs, medical or feeding needs, behavior, and specific community experiences in which students should be involved should all be included in the IEP-at-a-glance. When appropriate, the IEP-at-a-glance can also be shared with general education teachers, therapist, and support staff who work with the student. Develop student profiles based on information from the IEP that include what you know and what you have learned about the student and his or her learning style. It's important to write profiles so as to discuss students' strengths and needs. As you develop these profiles, you should keep two questions in mind: What can the student do? What is the student working on? Profiles should be easily accessible and should be shared with general education teachers and other support staff. (See Figure 1.4 for a sample student profile.)
- ▶ As you look at IEPs, develop a domain list—a categorized list of instructional areas based on IEPs, including general education, domestic, community, vocational, recreation and leisure, and health and hygiene—labeled with the students' names and the objectives that fall under each domain. This list will help you when you create your master schedule. (See Chapter 2, Figures 2.4 and 2.5, for ideas.)

Finding Appropriate Materials and Adaptive Equipment

Finding appropriate materials, equipment, and supplies can be the biggest challenge for you as a teacher—especially as students get older. You will need age-appropriate materials that are understandable and not too abstract for students with significant disabilities. Start exploring resources and making materials, knowing that this will be an ongoing process. IDEIA defines equipment as

- (a) Machinery, utilities, and built-in equipment, and any necessary enclosures or structures to house the machinery, utilities, or equipment; and
- (b) All other items

Figure 1.4 Student Profile

Student: Age: D.O.B.		<u>Documented Disability</u> <u>Health/Medical Information</u>
Grade:	Teacher:	
Parent/Guardian:	Phone:	
Siblings/Others at home:		
LIKES	DISLIKES	I learn best when . . .
I also want you to know that . . .		
Reading	Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Left-handed <input type="checkbox"/> Right-handed	Math

Work Habits and Self-Management		
Work Independently	Organization and Managing Belongings	Assistance Needed With Eating, Hygiene, or Self-Care
Communication		
Social/Behavioral		
Motor/Mobility		
Other Information		

SOURCE: Adapted from *Wisconsin School Inclusion Project: Team Planning Packet* (1995).

necessary for the functioning of a particular facility as a facility for the provision of educational services, including items such as instructional equipment and necessary furniture; printed, published, and audio-visual instructional materials; telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices; and books, periodicals, documents, and other related materials. (Sec. 300.14)

- ▶ Some students with significant disabilities may have specialized equipment for communication, educational, or therapy purposes. This equipment should be listed in the IEP, and the school district is required to provide access. Locate and become familiar with using this equipment before the students arrive. If there is something you can't find, contact your school administrator or special education administrator. It is imperative that appropriate equipment be available for the students on the first day of school.
- ▶ When students are included in general education classes, you need to become familiar with the curriculum, textbooks, workbooks, and other materials. Obtain a copy of the textbook(s) for each class, and try to get copies of the materials that will be used. To acquire a copy of these books, start by asking the general education teacher; then check with your building and district administrator. If you are lucky enough to obtain copies of the books and workbooks, guard them with your life so you will have them for future use. Be sure to familiarize yourself with what is taught and how the information is connected to state standards, benchmarks, or learning targets for that grade level. Also, be sure to look at the teacher's manuals, as many of them offer suggestion for reteaching or even modifying work. Locate materials and supplies that are age appropriate and as unobtrusive as possible. Teachers may need to adapt materials, especially written text, to include pictures and word symbols. This will be an ongoing process. (See Figure 1.5 for places to buy commercially made items.)
- ▶ Always use items such as photographs or line drawings to eliminate abstractness for student. For example, when teaching money, use real money instead of fake coins; take pictures in the school and community for a lesson on mapping; use real objects such as a book to represent reading time, a ball for gym class, and so on. Begin to collect these items as soon as you can. Remember to refer to students' IEPs to begin to develop a list of items and materials you will need.
- ▶ Start to collect menus from local restaurants. Some fast-food restaurants have picture menus that you can use as they are or that you can cut apart and place on individual index cards to make your own picture and word cards for students. Another hint—Sunday newspaper food ads provide great pictures to cut and paste for picture word cards. Be sure to laminate paper materials and picture word cards or any other appropriate items—they'll last longer. Store these items in an organized way, and put them in a place where you or your students can easily find them. Always label your storage items with picture and word labels. You may want to use the BoardMaker program by Mayer-Johnson as listed in Figure 1.5. You can also check the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative website (www.wati.org) for updated technology resources and a vendor list.

Figure 1.5 Assistive Technology (AT) Vendor List

Academic/Curricular Resources	Assistive Technology (General)
<p>Assistive Technology 7 Wells Avenue Newton, MA 02459 800-793-9227 http://www.assistivetech.com</p> <p>Don Johnston Incorporated 26799 West Commerce Drive Volo, IL 60073 800-999-4660 http://www.donjohnston.com</p>	<p>Closing the Gap http://www.closingthegap.com</p> <p>CAST Foundry Street Wakefield, MA 01880-3233 781-245-2212 http://www.cast.org</p> <p>Tash 3512 Mayland Ct. Richmond, VA 23233 800-463-5685 http://tashinc.com</p>
Communication	Independent Living
<p>AbleNet 1081 Tenth Ave. S.E. Minneapolis, MN 55414 800-322-0956 http://www.ablenetinc.com</p> <p>Enabling Devices 385 Warburton Ave Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706 800-832-8697 http://enablingdevices.com</p> <p>Mayer-Johnson P.O. Box 1579 Solana Beach, CA 92075 800-588-4548 http://www.mayer-johnson.com</p>	<p>Independent Living Aids 200 Robbins Lane Jericho, NY 11753 800-537-2118 http://www.independentliving.com</p> <p>Sammons Preston Rolyan 4 Sammons Court Bolingbrook, IL 60440 800-323-5547 http://www.sammonspreston.com</p> <p>Rubbermaid Health Care Products 1147 Akron Rd. Wooster, OH 44691 http://www.rubbermaid.com</p>
Leisure Activities	Software
<p>Linda J. Burkhart 6201 Candle Court Eldersburg, MD 21784 http://www.lburkhart.com</p> <p>RJ Cooper & Associates 27601 Forbes Rd., Suite 39 Laguna Niguel, CA 92677 800-752-6673 http://www.rjcooper.com</p>	<p>Attainment Company 504 Commerce Parkway PO Box 930160 Verona, WI 53593-0160 800-327-4269 http://www.attainmentcompany.com</p> <p>SoftTouch Software 4300 Stine Road, Suite 401 Bakersfield, CA 93313 877-763-8868 http://www.softtouch.com</p>

SOURCE: Compiled by Lisa Barczyk, 2007.

Physical and Visual Arrangements Within the Room

Students with significant disabilities should spend as much time as possible with their peers in general instructional and recreational learning environments. It is likely that students with significant and multiple disabilities will spend some portion of their school day in a specially designed environment to support their unique educational needs. Typically, you will be the teacher in that classroom.

- ▶ When setting up your room or work areas, it is important that materials and equipment are easily accessible with adequate space for maneuverability. Materials should be labeled and stored in an organized fashion. You should also set up flexible areas around the room for different activities and for the diverse needs of the students.
- ▶ Diverse areas within your classroom should include the following:
 - a. A table for small-group instruction
 - b. An area sectioned off for quiet study area or down time that may contain a sofa, bean bag chairs, exercise ball, and rocking chair
 - c. Open space for physical movement or stretching if needed
 - d. An alternative to florescent lights if needed; for example, use floor lights with ceiling projection or incandescent bulbs
- ▶ When students are not using their wheelchairs, they should be located outside of the classroom or learning area, if possible. Designating a space in a coatroom works well. If the wheelchairs must be in the classroom due to hallway obstruction or fire codes, try not to bunch them all together. Choose several smaller, out-of-the-way areas for short periods of storage. Adaptive equipment such as standing frames, sidelyers, bean bags, floor sitters, and so on should be located in the areas where the equipment will be used by the student. If the student stands for math activities, keep the standing frame in the instructional area. If the student uses a floor sitter during the morning meeting, place the floor sitter near that area. If a wedge or bean bag is used for leisure time, locate those items in the leisure or play area.
- ▶ Classroom rules and expectations should always be posted. These rules should be put into simple, explicit language and include pictures to facilitate students' understanding. State the behavior that is expected or that should occur—for example, "keep your hands at your side" or "use soft voices." When posting items in the classroom, be aware of what is eye level for a student using a wheelchair.
- ▶ Visual displays should always include both picture and word. For example, you can use BoardMaker to create a sign with the bathroom picture paired with the word *bathroom*, to post in a spot that is easily seen by the students and teacher. Students will become familiar with the picture and word and might use this to communicate if they want to go to the bathroom and are unable to verbalize their need. Label objects in the room with pictures and words. In addition to promoting communication, this will also help students learn vocabulary and picture symbols. Labeling objects on shelves helps students to be responsible for retrieving and replacing learning materials.

Helping Administrators, General Education Teachers, and Support Staff Understand the Needs and Abilities of Students

Developing a successful relationship with your principal, fellow teachers, and support staff is very important both for you and your students with disabilities. Some administrators and general education teachers have had limited experience in working with students with significant disabilities. Because you are the best advocate for your students, a positive relationship can help smooth the way for all concerned.

- ▶ Special education has undergone many transformations over the years, and there might still be principals who are unaware of the latest legal and philosophical changes. It's up to special education administration and staff to help get them up-to-speed and to help them understand the continuum of services that needs to be provided. Inclusion is a process, and most school districts are now including students with disabilities in the general education classroom to varying degrees rather than keeping them in self-contained classrooms. Some principals have difficulty making the shift in thinking from the old idea of self-contained special education classrooms to inclusive general education classrooms and to using the community as a learning environment. As you assess your school situation, think about what your principal's philosophy might be. Special education administration or staff in your building might be able to help you with this. However, remember to separate fact from opinion as you listen to what they have to say.
- ▶ Another way to find out how your principal views special education in your school is to ask. However, don't stop him or her in the hallway for a philosophical discussion. Make an appointment, and indicate what you want to discuss when you do so. That way, your principal will be better prepared to talk with you. Also be sure to set a time at the beginning of the year—sometime before students arrive, if possible—to discuss your philosophical views and expectations of teaching with your support staff. Some of the things you may discuss with them are your role as the instructional leader, staff working as a team to support and teach students in different environments, a continuum of services, the process of inclusion over time, increase of social interactions with inclusion, allowing students to complete tasks for themselves, and documenting student progress. This might also be a good time to address any questions or concerns your support staff might have.
- ▶ If you are concerned about the philosophy of special education in your school and feel changes are needed, remember that you need to work along with, not against, the principal and your colleagues to help make this happen. If you are a new teacher, the best thing you can do is to demonstrate the dedication you have to your students through professionalism and commitment to your responsibilities. As you become a respected educator in the eyes of your principal and colleagues, your ability to advocate for and implement change will grow.
- ▶ Learn the school mission statement and philosophy. Develop a statement or some thoughts about how students with significant disabilities should be active

participants in promoting the school's vision. As the teacher, consider what you can do throughout the school year to promote your personal statement or thoughts.

- ▶ With the general education teachers, explore inclusive learning opportunities for students without disabilities as well as students with disabilities. Some of these might include disabilities awareness programs, cooperative learning situations, lunch buddies, career exploration, and community-referenced opportunities. Provide general education teachers and support staff with a copy of your student profiles. Have open communication with administrators and other teachers and staff about students' strengths and needs. Help your fellow teachers and other staff to understand how the individual student can shine during a lesson or other times when the student is included in general education. The general education teachers and support staff should also be aware of the student's learning style and how to teach to it as well as how a student communicates and expresses him- or herself (Kluth, 2003). The following questions should be discussed with other staff in planning instruction and inclusion (Ayers, 2001; Kluth, Straut, & Biklen, 2003):
 - a. Who is the student?
 - b. Under what circumstances does the student thrive and succeed?
 - c. What skills and abilities does this student have?
 - d. What is a learning priority for this student?
 - e. What is the student's awareness of him- or herself as a learner?
 - f. How does the student communicate his or her needs?
 - g. How can I facilitate participation in activities for this student?
 - h. How can I help this student find success?
 - i. What prevents me from or helps me to understand and see this student's competence?
 - j. What does this student value?
 - k. How and what can I learn from this student?

Discuss intervention strategies that assist in the student's success in the school community. For example, be sure to review specific behavior interventions and communication needs (see Chapter 7).

Knowing Your Community

The school building and classrooms will not be the only learning environments for your students. You must facilitate community-based or community-referenced instruction. Teaching functional skills in the settings in which they naturally occur is necessary because students with significant disabilities have difficulty with generalization (see the subsection Common Learning Characteristics in the Introduction and Overview for this book). Because of these generalization difficulties, there is no guarantee that what you teach your students in the classroom will carry over to the community setting where the skill is used. There are several things you can do to discover what your community has to offer and to facilitate instruction within the community.

- ▶ Familiarize yourself with your school district's policies regarding field trips into the community. There may not be a policy specifically for community instruction; however, you might be able to use the policy and procedures set up for field

trips. If you cannot find this information, ask your school administrator or special education administrator. Make sure you know your school's philosophy or mission statement, the liability policy, how emergencies are handled on field trips, transportation options, policies regarding training or community instruction expenses, and staff responsibilities. In addition, it's very important to know what kind of release forms are needed, including copies of the paperwork or permission slips that must be sent home with students for a parent's or guardian's signature.

- ▶ Also note if the school district has an “emergency issue” policy and procedure to follow. A student who is hurt or has a medical situation could constitute an emergency issue. Make copies of the procedures to follow, and include this with community lesson plans. If nothing like this exists, you might want to talk about it with your special education administrator.
- ▶ See if your school district has any policies about classroom assistants and support staff going into the community to provide instruction. Discuss with administration how classroom assistants and support staff can be used to facilitate small-group, community-based, and community-referenced activities. For example, two to four students accompanied by one adult could go into the community for unobtrusive and natural instruction. Finally, the importance of providing inclusive, community-referenced instruction for students with and without disabilities should be explored and discussed (see Chapter 5, Functional Planning).
- ▶ Before you can plan community activities, you must explore and select appropriate settings for instruction. This can be done by considering the following questions:
 - a. What environments do your students use in their daily lives with their families? Once you've compiled a short list, you will need to visit the environments you will be using. Be sure to complete the first column of the Discrepancy Analysis Form (see Figure 2.3 in Chapter 2) and determine the following about each place: When are business hours? How accessible is each business for people with disabilities? What are the times that the businesses are very busy and less busy with customers? Do they have any picture menus or other resources that might be useful for people with disabilities?
 - b. What environments might students use in the future in which to live, work, and play?
 - c. What businesses or instructional community settings are within walking distance of the school? Some examples could include a grocery store, shopping center, public library, or any other environment in which the student with significant disabilities can learn.
 - d. Do you have public transportation from your school? What businesses are located on the bus line? Obtain public bus line schedules and maps.
 - e. Does a cab company offer special rates for people with disabilities? Is there any paperwork that needs to be completed to receive a discount?