

INCREASING STUDENTS WITH  
DISABILITIES SKILLS THROUGH  
QUALITY INSTRUCTION IN THE  
ACADEMIC SUPPORT CLASS IN  
THE BRANDYWINE SCHOOL  
DISTRICT IN WILMINGTON, DE

by

Stephanie DeMayo

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in  
Educational Leadership

Spring 2018

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## **ABSTRACT**

Many secondary students with disabilities need specialized instruction in basic skills and strategies in addition to what they receive in their core content courses to achieve academic and post-secondary success. The Brandywine School District established the academic support class period to support the success of students with disabilities who are in the general education classroom. This class was to be a proactive step in helping students with disabilities build and maintain the skills necessary to engage and succeed in the inclusive general education classroom. However, academic support teachers appear to spend more time assisting students in the completion of their content coursework rather than instructing them in basic skills and strategies needed for success. My goal was to create a structure, including supports for educators working in the academic support class, that would promote students' acquisition of academic skills and strategies to increase success in the inclusive general education classrooms. I implemented the following strategies to achieve this goal: (a) identified current teaching practices, perceptions, and resources related to the academic support class; (b) provided a professional development plan outlining key instructional strategies; (c) identified and defined clear expectations for the academic support class for administrators, teachers, and parents; (d) created resources to help teachers identify and organize instruction

grounded in evidence-based practices to promote students' acquisition of needed strategies and skills; and (e) provided administrators with a tool to ensure that they implemented research-based instructional practices in the academic support class. Having a standard structure for teachers, administrators, and parents' that connects instruction and accountability for the success of students with disabilities in the academic support class. With clearly defined expectations, the system establishes periodic checks to ensure that teachers and administrators are held accountable for student learning through the implementation of highly effective instruction in the academic support class.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many students with learning disabilities at the secondary level face challenges emotionally, socially, and academically. Moreover, inclusive settings reflect a high level of rigor at a fast pace with little support for students struggling due to a lack of skill acquisition (Deshler, Schumaker, Bui, & Vernon, 2006; Hock et al., 2009; Lenz, Deshler, & Kissam, 2004). Consequently, many of these struggling students have not developed the skills necessary for academic success. According to the Brandywine School District's 2015–2016 testing data on 11th graders who took the SATs (See Table 1), only 14% of students with disabilities were proficient in English Language Arts, and 2% of students with disabilities were proficient in math (State of Delaware, 2017a).

To address the achievement gap for secondary students with disabilities in the Brandywine School District, I focused attention on the implementation of instruction through the academic support classes. Consequently, I approached the problem by reviewing the literature on best practices in reading for students with disabilities, and then developed a model to identify short- and long-term goals that could impact the success of students with disabilities participating in the academic support class. Moreover, I administered a survey (See Appendix C, Figure 3) to teachers who provided instruction in the academic support class. The data from this survey outlined teachers' levels of

perceived knowledge relating to the operationalization of instructional practices and barriers preventing implementation. Additionally, the information suggested the need for a teacher and administrator observation tool, professional development, and resources to help with implementation. Included in this portfolio are ten artifacts that support the understanding of how to support the academic success of students with disabilities through high-quality instruction in the Academic Support Class an overview of each is listed below.

1. Education Leadership Proposal Document: This artifact defines the problem of inconsistent instructional practices in the implementation of skill and strategy instruction in the Academic Support Class for students with disabilities across the secondary schools in the Brandywine School District. This artifact also highlights research on how the implementation of quality strategy and skill instruction helps to close the achievement gap for secondary students with disabilities, and describes the current practices occurring within my organization. These proposal documents intended to outline and guide my Education Leadership Portfolio work (SEE APPENDIX A).
2. Synthesis of Selected Literature on Learning Strategies for Students with Disabilities: This artifact is grounded in research that explains the current struggles students with disabilities face in secondary schools. It then

highlights research-based practices that support successful implementation of strategies to decrease the achievement gap for students with disabilities. (SEE APPENDIX B).

3. Logic Model for Academic Support Class in The Brandywine School District: This model explains the resources, activities, outputs, short and long term goals, and the desired impacts needed for successful implementation of the Academic Support Class in the Brandywine School District. (SEE APPENDIX C)
4. Academic Support Survey- The goal of this survey was to a) identify the teachers' level of satisfaction with the implementation of instructional practices in the Academic Support class and b) to better understand the challenges or barriers teachers face with the implementation of instructional practices during the Academic Support class. Outcome data from this survey helped to create resources and the professional development plan to assist teacher in instructional implementation (SEE APPENDIX D).
5. Academic Support Observation Tool: The this tool meant is to assist in outlining the key teaching behaviors one would observe in the Academic Support Class. This tool is specifically geared toward educators who teach and Academic Support Class as resource to reflect upon their instructional implementation. (SEE APPENDIX E).

6. Academic Support Expectations Flyers- This artifact consist of one-page flyers for each the administrators, teachers, and parents of the Brandywine School District that outlines a common set of expectations for the Academic Support Class. Each flyer is created to appeal to each of the specific audiences but still has a set of common expectations for instruction and learning. (SEE APPENDIX F).
7. Higher Leverage Practices Matrix with Skill Area of Needs Student Organizer: This is a one-page teacher resource that outlines the twelve most effective research-based practices for students with disabilities. This resource summarizes each of the twelve practices, describes the research behind these practices, and links skill and strategy instruction that support learning in each of the twelve areas (SEE APPENDIX G). Accompanying the Higher Leverage Practice Matrix is the Skill Area of Need Organizer. This organizer allows teachers to identify common and individualized areas of need amongst students in the Academic Support Class so they can better plan their instruction (SEE APPENDIX H).
8. Academic Support Professional Development Plan: This artifact is an overview of the professional development content and timeline for the new implementation of strategy and skill instruction in Academic Support Class.

Included is an introduction power point that will be used with teachers and administrators (SEE APPENDIX I).

9. Academic Support Lesson Plan: This artifact is a resource for teachers to in plan and preparing for their Academic Support Class. The lesson plan includes the skill (s) the teacher intends to cover, the connection to a high leverage practice, and the specific actions both the teacher and the student will take during the Academic Support class. This artifact also includes an annotated version of what is expected in each section to help guide teachers through their planning (SEE APPENDIX J).
10. Academic Support Walkthrough Tool- This tool is for the use of building and district administrators who evaluate teachers through the Delaware Performance Appraisal System II (DPAS-II). This tool guides administrators on what evidence supports learning in terms of planning, management, and instructional practices when walking through the Academic Support Class (SEE APPENDIX K).

## **Chapter 2**

### **PROBLEMS ADDRESSED**

Many students with disabilities at the secondary level lack skills necessary to meet the demands of the rigorous curriculum required to reach graduation (Deshler et al., 2006; Doren, Murray, & Gau, 2014; Harris, Schumaker, & Deshler, 2011). In fact, their struggle intensifies by the promotion of full inclusion without support for skill acquisition (Deshler et al., 2006; Hock et al., 2009; Lenz et al., 2004). Research on secondary content instruction for students with disabilities points to the significance of teaching self-regulated educational strategies and providing more intensive instruction to close the achievement gap (Lenz et al., 2004; Reid, Lienemann, & Hagaman, 2013).

For secondary students with learning disabilities, the instructional environment must aid students in skill acquisition and transfer. Furthermore, educators must be cognizant of the needs and strengths of their struggling students so they may provide relevant instruction (Askill-Williams, Lawson, & Skrzypiec, 2012; Lenz et al., 2004). When teachers understand the ways children learn, they can systematically provide them with cognitive strategies to become independent learners. Research indicates that students who use cognitive strategies to overcome textual challenges can become metacognitive in their learning, and therefore, independent (Askill-Williams et al., 2012; Berkeley, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2011; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2000). In the Brandywine School District, the academic support

class was intended to provide a learning environment where special education teachers refocused students toward academic independence and students' chances of post-secondary success.

The Brandywine School District serves students located in the northern part of New Castle County, Delaware. Students in this district derive from diverse backgrounds, creating heterogeneous groupings throughout the 16 elementary and secondary schools (State of Delaware, 2017b). Over the past decade, this diversity has influenced the Brandywine School District to provide a more inclusive model in their schools which provides students with and without disabilities to learn and access the same curriculum together.

According to the Delaware Department of Education's public records as of 2017–2018 school year, the Brandywine School District serves 5,514 students in their six secondary schools, grades 6 through 12. Moreover, 12% of this population receives special education services (State of Delaware, 2017b). These secondary schools comprise of three middle schools, grades 6 through 8, and three high schools, grades 9 through 12. Inserted into a content area class, such as English language arts, math, science, or social studies, are special education teachers who co-teach with a general education teacher. In the role of the special education teacher, there is a mandate to provide services, such as differentiated instruction and accommodations to students with disabilities within the general education classroom environment as they collaborate with the cooperating

general education teacher (Brandywine School District, 2008). Most of these students with disabilities are identified with high-incidence disabilities, such as a learning disability. In addition to working within the general education classroom, special education teachers have a 90-minute block of academic support time every other day (Brandywine School District, (2008). During this time, teachers provide students in their caseload with specialized instruction to master the skills outlined in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals.

These classrooms were homogeneous groupings of special education students, and content was modified and implemented at a considerably slower pace. When the district moved to a more inclusive model, they added the academic support class for students who were typically in self-contained classrooms so they could be successful in the general education curriculum (C. A. Ward, personal communication, March 9, 2015).

I joined the Brandywine School District as the secondary special education coordinator in September 2015. Part of my responsibility as the secondary coordinator was to assist special educators in providing superior instruction that fostered student success. I provided professional development on instructional practices and coached teachers on the execution of these practices to close the achievement gap between special and general education students. Moreover, my role had become especially significant with the addition of Results Driven Accountability mandated by the Office of Special Education Programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This mandate meant monitoring was not just about IEP compliance. Instead, there was an emphasis on results of IEP implementation. At one time, states were monitored for the construction of the IEP

components. Results Driven Accountably now evaluated effectiveness of the IEP in serving students with disabilities to be successful in the general education curriculum.

During the 2016–2017 school year (See Table 1), the Brandywine School District struggled with student achievement, predominantly in grade 11 (Delaware Department of Education, 2018). This struggle produced further examination into interventions and specialized skill instruction that could be developed to abet the success of students with disabilities. My role was to educate teachers about instructional practices that would successfully guide students with disabilities.

Table 1.

*Brandywine School District Performance SAT 2015–2016*

	Number in Group	Percent proficient			Scale Score Mean		
		Group	District	State	Group	District	State
All Students	623	62	63	52	513	514	490
ELA Students with Disabilities	42	14	14	11	394	395	393
ELA All Students	623	2	2	4	505	506	482
Math Students with Disabilities Math	42	2	2	4	380	381	394

*Note.* Data derived from Delaware Student Assessment Reporting & Analysis for the Public (ver. 2017). Retrieved from [https://pubapps.doe.k12.de.us/DSARA\\_Public/default.aspx](https://pubapps.doe.k12.de.us/DSARA_Public/default.aspx)

As a coordinator, I answered to the director of special services, but I am not an evaluator of teacher performance. I could only suggest changes and educate teachers on why and how to create an instructional change. Therefore, if they refused to change their instructional implementation, I was unable to leverage consequences for deficiencies of implementation. However, I worked diligently with the secondary school administrators overseeing special education teachers, the special education director, the director of high schools, and the director of curriculum and instruction. My role was to ensure that (a) funds were available for programs needed for students' skill-building during academic support, and (b) intervention programs used were evidence-based and promoted the skills required to access core content.

Although there was time allotted for skill instruction, I observed that many special education teachers used the academic support class to assist students in the completion of classroom or homework assignments. There appeared to be insufficient instruction on skill and strategy building by the academic support teacher. Most of the teachers' time was expended helping students finish assignments from other classes. The academic support classes often functioned as a glorified study hall. Further, across the six schools and within each school there was an inconsistency with the curriculum and instruction in the academic support class.

My concern was that student learning was compromised when teachers did not best utilize their time in academic support. For example, students were not expending time in academic support or other classes, learning strategies and skills necessary to tackle the demands of their rigorous curriculum. This misuse of time in academic support

was causing many special education teachers to modify the curriculum so students could achieve albeit at a lower level of rigor. When this occurred, the teacher compromised expectations of the students' abilities, and the result was an inequitable education compared to their peers without disabilities. The increase in curriculum modification in core content areas and the lack of skill and strategy instruction during academic support hindered students from becoming independent learners. The absence of focused instruction as well as inconsistent expectations of academic support was harming students' achievement and their probabilities of postsecondary success.

One solution to school completion for students with disabilities is the successful acquisitions of skill and strategies that can be generalized into the content areas (Bear, Kortering, & Braziel, 2006). The attainment of these skills and strategies is only achievable through evidence-based, intensive, explicit instruction (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2014; Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2014). Therefore, the objective is to craft an academic support class in the Brandywine School District consistent throughout the six secondary schools by targeting student needs through teacher implementation of instructional practices.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

The academic support class provides an opportunity for special education teachers at secondary schools in the Brandywine School District to provide students with disabilities the tools necessary to close the achievement gap. In fact, research demonstrates direct instruction for students with disabilities is one of the most effective practices a teacher can offer (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Reviewing research on skills and strategic instructions aided my understanding of methods to equip and provide special educators with resources. These synthesized findings were included in the Synthesis of Selected Literature on Learning Strategies for Students with Disabilities (See Appendix B), which explained the current struggles students with disabilities face in secondary schools. The literature review discussed how teachers could implement strategies to decrease the achievement gap. For example, in the Brandywine School District, this instruction should take place in the academic support classroom. During the class, students with disabilities have the opportunity and time to receive direct instruction in the skill areas of need.

It was essential to create a logic model to comprehend all the mechanisms and methods that played a part in the desired outcomes of my Educational Leadership Portfolio. Within the academic support class in the Brandywine School District Logic

Model (See Appendix C), there is an explanation of the resources, activities, outputs, and the short- and long-term outcomes necessary for successful implementation of skill and strategy instruction in the academic support class. The ultimate goal is to create consistency across the six secondary schools in their implementation of highly effective instructional practices to promote skill and strategy acquisition in the academic support classroom. By creating this structure, the number of modifications made to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities should decrease, and the structure should promote more rigor and higher expectations for students. Consequently, I addressed the following short-term outcomes from the logic model to reach the long-term goals:

1. Develop resources and a professional development plan to increase gaps in teacher knowledge.
2. Establish consistent expectations for the academic support classes across all secondary schools and among all stakeholders.
3. Create a way for administrators to hold teachers accountable for providing high-quality practices that support skill and strategy acquisition.

## **Outcome 1**

### **Develop Resources and a Professional Development**

#### **Plan to Increase Gaps in Teacher Knowledge**

Understanding the perceived level of knowledge and satisfaction teachers had with the current implementation of strategy and skill instruction in the academic support class was crucial to creating resources and professional development. Consequently, I sent an electronic survey (See Appendix C) to 69 special education teachers of all genders, ages, and levels of teaching experience at the secondary school level who taught an academic support class in the Brandywine School District. The goal of this survey was to (a) identify the teachers' level of satisfaction with the implementation of instructional practices in the academic support class, and (b) understand better the instructional practices in the challenges or barriers teachers face when implementing instructional practices during the academic support class. I collected 29 special education teacher responses from 69 potential participants. In the first part of the survey, teachers were asked to identify their level of agreement with ten statements on a Likert-type scale concerning the academic support class. For example, statements incorporated teacher knowledge and satisfaction of instruction relating to the academic support class period. Teachers rated each item from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to (4) (*strongly agree*), with an option to answer item 5 (*I am not sure*). Additionally, the last two survey items consisted of open-ended questions related to barriers and needs for instructional implementation during the academic support class. I created these items through informal observations of the current academic support class.

Once I identified the areas of need concerning the implementation of strategy and skill, I reviewed resources for the teachers. The first teacher resource I created was based on the McLeskey et al. (2017) article on high leverage practices to support struggling students, organized in one front-to-back page across three columns that identified the 12 most effective instructional practices for students with disabilities (See Appendix F). Briefly, the first column highlighted the essential points on the instructional practice. Next, the second column identified the research behind the practice. Finally, the third column informed teachers of the practical instructional uses by identifying strategies, skills, or programs associated with the practice.

Based on the findings in the literature, I created the Skill Area of Need Student Organizer (See Appendix G) for teachers to consider which practices would best meet the needs of their students. This tool can help teachers plan classes based on students' needs. When teachers have completed the organizer, they can identify which students' needs overlap and which needs are outliers. From this information, teachers can better plan lessons for academic support since they will be able to see what skills and strategies they can teach in a group setting and which ones will need individualized instruction.

The second prong of this tool requires teachers to identify their students' areas of need and match the practices that best meet those needs. In other words, it provides a way for teachers to work through the lesson and plan their instruction. To assist with this process, I created the Academic Support Lesson Plan with an annotated version (See Appendix J). This document can assist teachers in planning and preparing for their academic support class. The lesson plan includes the skills teachers intend to cover, the

connection to a high-leverage practice, and the specific actions that both the teachers and students will take during the academic support class. Accompanying this lesson plan is an annotated version of the teacher walk-through the process.

With these resources created, teachers and administrators need a way to learn the materials and instruction expectations for the academic support class. Accordingly, I created a professional development plan that incorporates training for teachers and administrators (See Appendix I). This plan is an overview of the method in which professional development will be rolled out to the teachers and administrators on the academic support class. The professional development plan begins with an introduction to the higher leverage practices and maps out what training will occur each month. This professional development plan will allow teachers to increase their knowledge of how to implement highly effective instructional practices with the result of increasing the acquisition of skill and strategies for students with disabilities in the academic support class.

## **Outcome 2**

### **Establish Consistent Expectations for the Academic**

#### **Support Classes Across All the Secondary**

#### **Schools and Among All Stakeholders**

As a result of my work in the secondary schools, it became evident there was extreme diversity in methods teachers were utilizing the academic support class within the schools and across the district. Administrators also had unclear expectations of what instruction should be occurring during this time. Most teachers and administrators

understood the academic support class as a time dedicated for students to take assessments and make up missed assignments. Parents also may have misunderstood expectations. Sitting in IEP meeting, I have heard parents acknowledge the academic support class as a time for their child to work on class assignments with the assistance of the special educator. These misconceptions from all have added to the glorified study hall perception of the academic support class.

Therefore, it was essential to create and share the expectations of the academic support class with teachers, administrators, and parents. An effective way to do this is through a one-page flyer for each stakeholder (See Appendix F). All three flyers are grounded in the research on the positive academic effects skill and strategy instruction has on students with disabilities. Each flyer contains specific information appealing to the targeted stakeholder group but has the same expectations for the academic support class.

The plan is to provide the flyer with the district achievement data for students with disabilities to the administrators during their Professional Learning Community. During this time, I would outline the expectations and goals of the academic support class. Teachers will receive their flyer at the beginning of the school year during their professional development day. During that time, I can also meet with all special education teachers from each of the secondary schools who teach an academic support class to go through the research on best practices and explicitly address the expectations and goals of the academic support class. The parent flyer is more simplistic and outlines the goals and the expectations of the academic support class. This flyer also contains information about whom the parent can contact with questions related to their child's

involvement in the academic support class. The parent flyers will be distributed through academic support teachers at the beginning of the year, during each secondary schools' open house, and during the parent council night in the spring 2018 and fall 2018. The intended outcome will be a common understanding of expectations for the academic support class in its efforts to provide students with disabilities the skills necessary to achieve academic success in school and in their post-secondary endeavors.

### **Outcome 3**

#### **Create a Way for Administrators to Hold Teachers Accountable for Providing High-Quality Practices That Support Skill and Strategy Acquisition**

One method to ensure schools provide teachers with high-leverage practices is to hold teachers accountable for their students' learning. Once we provide teachers with practices that support skill and strategy instruction, they must be held accountable for implementing that instruction in the classroom. Administrators are tasked with observing and holding teachers accountable for student success. A problem that has arisen in some of the secondary schools concerns the level of comfort and knowledge the building administrators have with special education instruction. In my discussions with administrators, they told me they want to learn and understand their role in observing the academic support classroom. To meet this need, I created the Academic Support Walk-Through Tool. This tool will guide administrators through the evaluation of teachers in the academic support class related to the Delaware Performance Appraisal System II (DPAS-II). Therefore, the walk-through tool outlines what an administrator observes in

the academic support class as it aligns to three components: (a) planning and preparation, (b) classroom environments, and (c) implementation of instruction. The result should be the implementation of this tool in the upcoming school year with the intention to hold teachers accountable for providing high-quality instructional practices to support skill and strategy acquisition.

The resources and research I have completed have created the strategies to promote the successful implementation of the academic support class. Furthermore, it will aid in improving the quality of instruction for students with disabilities in the academic support class by (a) developing resources and a professional development plan to increase gaps in teacher knowledge, (b) establishing consistent expectations for the academic support classes across all secondary schools and among all stakeholders, and (c) creating a way for administrators to hold teachers accountable for providing high-quality practices that support student skill and strategy acquisition.

## **Chapter 4**

### **IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES RESULTS**

Restructuring the academic support classroom is in the early stages at the Brandywine School District. However, the special education department supports the shift in efforts to provide students with disabilities at the secondary level the best instruction to promote post-secondary success. Since I began working in the district, I have set short-term outcomes to begin to alter the implementation of instruction in the academic support class. The ultimate goal remains the same: to create consistency in the academic support classroom instruction based on the implementation of high-leverage practices, such as direct instruction in skill and strategy acquisition. This consistency will decrease the number of modifications made in the general education curriculum for students with disabilities while maintaining the rigor and expectation that are equitable for all students. This chapter highlights the results of the short-term outcomes thus far.

#### **Outcome 1**

##### **Develop Resources and a Professional Development**

###### **Plan to Increase Gaps in Teacher Knowledge**

Based on the findings from the Academic Support Survey (See Appendix C), teachers expressed dissatisfaction related to resources and training. Over half of the teachers surveyed (55%) agreed that they did not have enough curricular materials to

meet the needs of their students. Seventy-one percent of the teachers agreed they needed more training in the implementation of instructional practices to build useful student skills and strategies. Fifty-nine percent of teachers identified lack of curricular materials as one of the principal barriers to the implementation of instructional skills and strategies in the academic support class.

The results of the survey led me to further examine the types of practices that would help teachers more effectively provide strategy and skill instruction. In the fall of 2017, the Council for Exceptional Children published a meta-analysis that identified the twelve most highly effective practices for the success of students with disabilities (McLeskey et al., 2017). The twelve practices identified focus on (a) student engagement strategies; (b) prioritizing; (c) systematic instruction; (d) accommodations, differentiation, and modification; (e) cognitive and metacognitive strategy instruction; (f) scaffold supports; (g) explicit instruction; (h) flexible grouping; (i) assistive and instructional technologies; (j) intensive instruction; (k) maintenance and generalization; and (l) constructive feedback (learning and behavior).

Along with the support and assistance of special education and review by the curriculum department, the High Leverage Practice Matrix came to be (See Appendix F). The goal was to introduce this tool to all special education teachers in the six secondary schools during their professional learning communities (PLC) as a way to improve student success through high-quality practices. Special educators have been tasked to review the High Leverage Practice Matrix and go through each of the twelve practices during their PLCs. Each of the secondary schools has a minimum of 45 minutes at least

once a month devoted to special educators' meetings to review important district information. They also discuss curricular materials and supports teachers can provide to help with student success. Up to now, each school has received an introduction from me to the higher leverage practices during their PLC. However, only one school has gotten to the next level of breaking the practices apart and identifying how they can be utilized in their academic support class. This middle school had pairs of special education staff research each practice. The teachers were then tasked to share their findings through a presentation with their team during the special education PLC. The presentations I have observed thus far have been overflowing with information and resources to help teachers implement skill and strategy instruction within and outside the academic support class. Hopefully, this strategy will be replicated with the remaining five secondary schools.

Once teachers learn the practices, they can implement skill and strategy instruction during their academic support class. Teachers in Delaware are expected to plan and prepare lessons as part of the DPAS-II. Teachers must demonstrate they can select instructional goals and design coherent instruction to be considered highly effective in this area. They also must demonstrate their knowledge of content and pedagogy, knowledge of students, and the ability to design student assessments. The Skill Area of Need Student Organizer (See Appendix G) and Academic Support Lesson Plan (Appendix I) have yet to be rolled out to the teachers. Both tools align with the expectation of the DPAS-II related to planning and preparation. If teachers follow align their practice to reflect the areas of walk-through tool, they are likely to be rated higher in

the area of planning because they will have tools necessary to plan their lessons to match instructional practice with the student needs.

The Academic Support Observation Tool (Appendix D) outlines the successful implementation of skill and strategy instruction. This tool is based on Schumaker's (1989) research on effective implementation of strategy instruction through specific teaching behaviors. Teachers can use the observation tool as a way to identify what needs to occur pre-, during-, and post-instruction.

## **Outcome 2**

### **Establish Consistent Expectations for the Academic**

#### **Support Classes Across All the Secondary**

#### **Schools and Among All Stakeholders**

Historically, most teachers have used the academic support class as a way to support students through their content assignments. The lack of implementation of instructional skills and strategies is due to the perception that teachers are helping students to succeed. Teachers help to support students through their content assignments and assessments but are not providing the fundamental skills necessary for the students to have post-secondary success. Additionally, the district never articulated expectations for the academic support class. Rather, this task was left to the building staff. The results of the Academic Support Survey (See Appendix C, Table 7) indicated 51% of teachers disagreed with the idea that they did not have clear expectations of what instruction should be occurring during the academic support class. However, in response to the open-

ended question, 21% of teachers identified unclear expectations as a barrier to the implementation of instruction during the academic support class.

Often, teachers rely on the building administrator to guide their expectations. Most administrators do not have the instructional background necessary in special education to know what to expect from teachers in their schools as it pertains to the academic support class. Therefore, the implementation of instruction varied depending on the administrators' expectations across the six secondary schools.

During the next school year, this barrier will be addressed by establishing district expectations for the academic support class. The result will be a common vision and goal for the implementation of highly effective practices to increase skill and strategy instruction in the academic support class. The expectations will be communicated to teachers, administrators and parents to ensure the success of students with disabilities.

### **Outcome 3**

#### **Create a Way for Administrators to Hold Teachers Accountable**

#### **For Providing High-Quality Practices That Support**

#### **Skill and Strategy Acquisition**

Currently, in the Brandywine School District, there is no walk-through tool that helps building administrators evaluate the academic support classes. Once teachers learn skill and strategy instruction best practices, administrators must determine how to hold teachers accountable for implementation. There have been times when the district provided professional development opportunities for teachers but the information learned was not assimilated into their instructional practices. Therefore, teachers must be held

accountable for what students learn. The walk-through tool outlines what an administrator should observe in the academic support class as it aligns with the three components (planning and preparation, classroom environment, and instruction) as per the DPAS-II. The hope is to implement this tool in the upcoming school year with the intention that teachers are held accountable for providing high-quality instructional practices to support skill and strategy acquisition.

## **Chapter 5**

### **REFLECTIONS ON IMPROVEMENT EFFORT RESULTS**

In an age of increased rigor and a focus on closing the achievement gap, it has become increasingly important for students with disabilities to succeed academically and become college and career ready as outlined in the Common Core State Standards. The momentum toward achievement can be overwhelming for teachers and students alike. However, providing students with the tools necessary to become independent learners can help increase their chance for post-secondary success. In the Brandywine School District, we are fortunate to have the 90-minute academic support period dedicated to working with our secondary special education students. When this learning environment is structured to provide evidence-based instructional interventions, teachers can decrease the number of modifications to the general education curriculum. Therefore, the goal of this project was to create an academic support class in the Brandywine School District that is consistent with the implementation of skill and strategy instruction across all six secondary schools. The short-term outcomes which helped to scaffold the success of this goal were as follows:

1. Developed resources and a professional development plan to reduce the gaps in teacher knowledge.
2. Established consistent expectations for the academic support class across all secondary academic support classrooms and with all stakeholders.

3. Created a method for administrators to hold teachers accountable for providing high-quality practices that support skill and strategy acquisition.

Parts of the desired outcomes have been successful while others must be fully implemented. In particular, I must gain support from secondary administrators and acceptance from special educators. Schools whose administration supports the philosophy of full inclusion and equitable education for all students have been the most successful in engaging teachers in professional development on instructional practices from the High Leverage Practice Matrix. For example, teachers from one middle school have embraced learning new practices to support students in the school. Moreover, this school has taken the 12 higher leverage practices and created meaningful presentations and resources to share with each other to increase student success. In this school, they are confident they will meet the improvement goal due to the support of the administrator, the desire to learn and grow, and the belief that all students can be successful in the general education curriculum.

The schools that were not as successful in embracing and planning for the implementation of these strategies seem to have similar barriers. These barriers include unsupportive administration, lack of PLC opportunities, and contradictory philosophical beliefs. Through conversations with administrators, I found various reasons why they were unsupportive of the implementation. Some administrators feared without teachers assisting students with the completion of homework and class assignments, those special education students would not pass and graduate. Others did not pre-plan the schedule to meet the needs of the academic support class. The most common reason, however, was

that many administrators lack the knowledge in special education instructional practices and are unsure how to be supportive.

Another barrier to implementation has been the lack of PLC opportunities. I have established at least 45-minute PLCs with each of the secondary schools. During this time, I can only meet with the special educators in the school. However, I do not meet consistently at each school and never know which teachers will attend. For example, I meet with one school several times a month; however, only six teachers of the 13 can attend because there is no coverage for their classes. Therefore, it is difficult and inefficient when I am providing professional development for less than half the staff. At other schools, I only see them once a month. Some of the time I meet with them must be dedicated to compliance issues, such as the structure of the IEP, which limits time spent on the higher leverage practices. So, it has been challenging to implement the professional development plan across all six schools in the district consistently.

Another barrier has been the changing teacher perceptions of the academic support class's purpose and the belief about what their students can do. It has been a struggle for many teachers to shift their mindset from the reactive to the proactive. Many teachers have expressed that students who do not have an opportunity to work on their content area assignments during the academic support class will not pass. Moreover, they believe they must create modifications to the complexity of the general education curricula resulting in weak content, which causes many of the students to fall further behind in meeting the standards. When the students move from middle to high school and grade to grade, they are ill-equipped to meet the rigorous demands, and the cycle

continues. When these students are unsuccessful, teachers expressed the desire for self-contained content classes. Research showed us that by separating students based on perceptions of ability, we attribute their failures to their disabilities and inherently lower our expectations (Clark, 1997; Grimes, 1981). Teachers must accept the sound research, which illustrates skill and strategy instruction through well-designed instructional practices, enables students to become independent, successful learners. By teaching students the skills they need and how to use them, they become less reliant on special educators holding their hands through assignments. This is also why teachers must embrace professional development and ongoing coaching to support student independence through skill and strategy instruction,

Although these barriers still exist, the implementation of the lesson plan, academic support expectation flyer, and walk-through tool are more important than originally hypothesized. The one-page flyers define the goal and expectations for the academic support class in a consistent manner for each stakeholder. The lesson plan lets teachers plan instruction based on the needs of their students and provides a clear format for the class period. Finally, the walk-through tool will help administrators observe instruction in the academic support class by clearly defining what planning, management, and instruction, should look like and correlating this to the teacher appraisal system, which will hold teachers accountable.

The next step in completing this project involves the support and collaboration from the special education department, the head of secondary schools, and the curriculum department. We must all use identical vocabulary, emphasize consistent expectations, and

share the same goals relating to the instruction of our students with disabilities in the academic support class. Part of the message that must come explicitly from each department is that all students with disabilities have the potential for success with the implementation of quality instruction. In the next school year, I plan to have two special education PLCs per month with one dedicated to compliance and IEPs and the other to instructional practices. Once the expectations are communicated, I will observe academic support classes to identify whether expectations have been fulfilled with consistency in the secondary schools.

## **Chapter 6**

### **REFLECTIONS ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Over the last seven years, I have been fortunate to increase my potential as a leader through the positions I have held, the professional development opportunities I have been afforded and, most of all, the opportunity to be part of the Educational Leadership Doctoral program at the University of Delaware. I joined the ACCESS (Adapting Curriculum and Classroom Environments for Student Success) Project at the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies in the fall of 2011 as an instructional coach for the state. As a young teacher, I was inexperienced in my role as a teacher-leader but was eager to learn. It was imperative that I learn how I could make a difference for students with disabilities. As I began doctoral classes in the spring of 2012, I learned my passion lay in making an effective, systematic change to increase the success of students with disabilities.

During my time at the ACCESS project, I concurrently took classes and incorporated what I was learning into my work. After each class, I had more confidence in the decisions I was making because they were grounded in research. I also learned that when I worked with teachers who were challenging, persuading them with best practices based on research helped with their buy-in and also gave them confidence in my abilities as a coach. As an instructional coach, I worked with all districts in the

state, which afforded a decent representation of different systems within the state.

Furthermore, I applied my knowledge of the different leadership models to the various school systems I worked with across the state.

The classes I took at the university also prepared me for my role as a leader in the Brandywine School District. As such, my studies at the university helped me to determine in what way to work with each of the leadership styles I had encountered thus far. This was significant for my Educational Leadership Portfolio (ELP). I have matched strategies for school acceptance and implementing instruction with the vision and leadership styles in each of the secondary schools in the district.

Another class that has significantly helped with my ELP has been the program evaluation class. The skills I learned in this class helped me to assess the current conditions of the academic support class. For example, we learned methods to create a logic model to identify ways to reach the ultimate program outcome. Moreover, I used what I learned to create the Academic Support Logic Model for the Brandywine School District. From this, I identified my short- and long-term outcomes and considered how to improve the program.

The reading research classes taken as part of my doctoral journey have also contributed greatly to my work on the academic support class. For example, these classes led me to understand research methods to support instructional practices. In fact, I have used the literature reviewed concerning best practice to identify quality curricular materials and instructional practices to share with students. Reading plays such a critical

role with our student with disabilities. If they have the skills to comprehend what they read, their world opens up greatly.

Overall, the work on my ELP has made me a better leader. I have learned to work with the differing leadership styles throughout our district, which has made me well rounded in working alongside leadership. Moreover, I have reviewed programs to make research-based decisions about best practices for students using the knowledge I learned from my classes. Most of all, I have begun to shift the current system to help students with disabilities become successful learners and increase their potential for post-secondary success.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**ELP PROPOSAL DOCUMENT**

To achieve academic and post-secondary success many secondary students with disabilities need specialized instruction in basic skills and strategies in addition to what they receive in their core content courses (Lenz et al., 2004; Reid et al., 2013). The academic support class period was established in the Brandywine School District to support the success of these students who were included in the general education classroom. This class was to be a proactive step in helping students with disabilities build and maintain the skills necessary to engage and succeed in the inclusive general education classroom. However, the academic support period has become a glorified study hall where teachers appear to spend more time assisting students in the completion of their content coursework rather than instructing them in basic skills and strategies needed for success. My goal was to create a structure, Steps to Successful Academic Support (See Figure 2), to assist educators working in the academic support class. Specifically, this structure promotes students' acquisition of academic skills and strategies to increase their success in the inclusive general education classrooms. As shown in Figure 2, the steps included the following strategies that (a) identified current teaching practices, perceptions, and resources related to the academic support class, (b) gathered data via a teacher survey and a literature review, (c) provided a professional development plan that outlined key instructional strategies, (d) identified and defined clear expectations about

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Observe current practice	Observations of the current instructional practices in the academic support classroom. An observation tool will look for the instruction of skill and strategies, evidence-based practices, and other instructional practices used in the academic support class.
Survey teacher knowledge and additional literature	Gather data to determine teacher knowledge about strategy and skill instruction and current curricular materials or programs teachers are utilizing in their academic support class. Also, gather data on intervention programs and curricula that will assist teachers with skill acquisition related to evidence-based practices.
Provide professional development	Provide professional development on instructional strategies, skills curricula, diagnostic assessments, and lesson planning for the academic support period during Brandywine PLCs that occur bi-monthly.
Establish clear expectations for academic support.	This will help with the consistency of what instruction is occurring in the academic support classrooms. Expectations will include suggested timing of skill instruction, as well as suggested Lesson Planning tools for instruction during this class.
Create curricular resource guide	This will be a resource guide for teachers to review and help make decisions on what skill and strategy instruction can best fit the needs of each class and student.
Observe Fidelity	Use classroom observation tool to determine if teachers are utilizing newly learned strategies and skills, and as a way for teachers struggling to see what the class period can look like.

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*Figure 2. Steps to Successful Academic Support*

the academic support class for administrators, teachers, and parents, (d) created resources to help teachers identify and organize instruction grounded in evidence-based practices to promote the acquisition of needed strategies and skills and (f) provided administrators a tool to ensure research-based instructional practices are implemented in the academic support class. I learned there is a need for a common structure among all schools for the academic support classes, including specific expectations, resources, professional development on strategies and skill instruction, and administrator feedback. The next steps for the successful implementation of the academic support class included gaining administrator and teacher buy in and support. Creating this structure required that (a)

administrators be trained on the expectations and observation of educators during implementation of instruction in the academic support class, and (b) professional development for teachers include critical teaching behaviors, expectations of the academic support class, and instructional resources that promote the success of skill and strategy acquisitions for students with disabilities.

### **Organizational Context**

The Brandywine School District serves students located in the northern part of New Castle County, Delaware. Students in this district come from diverse backgrounds, creating heterogeneous groupings throughout the 16 elementary and secondary schools. Over the past decade, this has helped the Brandywine School District move to a more inclusive model in their schools. Consequently, the school environment is established to promote a condition where students with and without disabilities can learn and access the same together.

As of the 2017–2018 school year, the Brandywine District serves 5,514 in their six secondary schools, grades 6 – 12. Twelve percent of this population is receiving special education services. The secondary schools are made up of three middle schools, grades 6 – 8, and three high schools, grades 9 – 12. Each special education teacher is inserted as a co-teacher in a content area class, such as English language arts, math, science, or social studies. Furthermore, the role of the special education teacher is to provide services to students with disabilities within the general education classroom environment as they collaborate with the cooperating general education teacher. Most of the students with disabilities who are in the inclusive classroom are identified with high-

incidence disabilities, such as a learning disability. In addition to working within the general education classroom, special education teachers have a 90-minute block of time every other day scheduled during the 5th period used for academic support. During this time, teachers provide students in their caseload with specialized instruction to support their mastery of skills outlined in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals.

These classrooms were homogeneous groups of special education students working on modified content that was taught at a much slower pace. When the district and school adopted a more inclusive model, they added the academic support class to help students who were typically in self-contained classrooms be successful in the general education curriculum (C. A. Ward, personal communication, March 9, 2015).

Currently, many special education teachers use the academic support period to assist students in the completion of classroom or homework assignments. My preliminary observations have suggested there the academic support teachers provide insufficient instruction on skill and strategy building. Instead, much of the teacher's time is spent helping students complete assignments they needed to finish for other classes, so they do not fail that particular content area. Therefore, the academic support period functions much as a glorified study hall. Further, across teachers, there is no consistency of curriculum or instruction.

## **Organizational Role**

After joining the Brandywine School District as the secondary special education coordinator in September 2015, part of my responsibility was to assist special educators in providing quality instruction to foster student success. I provided professional development on instructional practices and coached teachers on the implementation of these practices with a goal of closing the achievement gap between special and general education. My role had become even more important with the addition of Results Driven Accountability mandated by the Office of Special Education Programs (2016). Accordingly, they are monitoring not just IEP compliance, but results as well. In the past, states have only been monitored the construction of the IEP components. Results Driven Accountably examines how well the IEP is being implemented to help students with disabilities access and be successful in the general education curriculum. During the 2014–2015 school year, the Brandywine School District struggled with student achievement, particularly in grade 11, which was also seen at Brandywine High School (DDOE, 2016). This caused a further examination of various interventions and specialized skill instruction to help the success of students. My role was to help educate teachers in instructional practices that work best for students with disabilities and provide methods to use with the time given throughout the school year.

As a coordinator, I answer to the director of special services, but I am not an evaluator of teacher performance. I can only suggest changes and educate teachers about why and how to make an instructional change. Therefore, if they refuse to change their instructional implementation, I am unable to leverage consequences for their lack of

implementation. Therefore, I work closely with the Brandywine High School's special education administrator, the teachers, the special education director, the director of high schools, and the director of curriculum and instruction to ensure (a) they receive and use funds for programs needed to help students' skill-building during academic support, and (b) intervention programs used are evidence-based and help promote the skills needed to access core content.

### **Problem Statement**

Many students with disabilities at the secondary level lack the skills needed to meet the demands of the rigorous curriculum required to fulfill graduation requirements (Deshler et al., 2006; Doren et al., 2014; Harris et al., 2011) Their struggle is intensified by full inclusion with little support for skill acquisition (Deshler et al., 2006; Hock et al., 2009; Lenz et al., 2004). Research on secondary content instruction for students with disabilities points to the importance of teaching self-regulated educational strategies and providing more intensive instruction to close the achievement gap (Lenz et al., 2004; Reid et al., 2013)

Based on my initial observations and discussions with teachers and students, it is my impression that academic support is used as a study hall. Teachers appear to spend more time coaching students on assignment completion than working with students on skills outlined in their IEPs. The environment is more reactive than proactive. My concern is that when teachers do not correctly utilize the time in academic support, the consequences may be detrimental to student learning. For example, students are not spending time in academic support or in their other classes, learning strategies and skills

to help them tackle the demands of the rigorous curriculum. This poor utilization of time is causing many special education teachers to modify the curriculum so students can achieve albeit at a lower level of skill. When this happens, the expectations of the students' abilities are compromised, and the result is an education that is not equitable when compared to that of their peers without disabilities. The poor academic outcomes of students with disabilities are evident in Table 2 below, which demonstrates the results of state reading and mathematics assessments for students in 11th grade for the 2014–2015 school year.

Table 2

*Brandywine School District Performance and Participation, Smarter Grade 11, 2014–2015*

Group	Brandywine School District			Statewide		
	Mean Scale Score	Percent Proficient	Participation Rate	Mean Scale Score	Percent proficient	Participation Rate
All Students	2603	59	95	2582	52	91
ELA Students with Disabilities	2460	5	91	2476	12	91
ELA All Students	2562	28	94	2541	23	90
Math Students with Disabilities	2439	3	80	2438	2	70

The increase in curriculum modification in core content areas and the lack of focused skill and strategy instruction during academic support is hindering students from becoming independent learners. Teachers may not have the skills necessary to teach skill

and strategy acquisition, and therefore, feel more comfortable with assisting in content work completion. Students are becoming more reliant on their teachers' assistance to help them continue with the content since they are not equipped with the skills and strategies to overcome a difficult learning situation. The lack of focused instruction and inconsistent expectations of academic support may be hurting student achievement and their postsecondary success.

### **Improvement Goal**

One key to school completion for students with disabilities is the successful application of the academic skills they have learned (Bear et al., 2006). Therefore, the goal is to create an academic support class structure that promotes students' acquisition of academic skills and strategies. Acquisition of these skills and strategies will support the academic success of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. When students use skills and strategies learned they are more likely to overcome textual challenges because they become metacognitive in their learning, and therefore, independent (Askill-Williams et al., 2012; Berkeley et al., 2011; Blachowicz & Fischer, 2000; USDHHS, 2000.) This is only possible through intensive, explicit instruction of skills and strategies that are evidence-based (Fuchs et al., 2014; Torres et al., 2014). Consequently, my plan will include nine artifacts (See Table 3) that support the understanding of how to support the academic success of students with disabilities through high-quality instruction in the academic support class.

Table 3

*Proposed Artifacts*

Number	Artifact	Type	Audience	Description	Status	Timeline
1	The Importance of Learning Strategies for Struggling Students with Learning Disabilities in the Secondary Schools	Leadership and Teacher Communication	Curriculum Department, Administrators, and Teachers	This paper explains the current struggles students with learning disabilities face in the secondary schools. It then looks at the types of strategies teachers can implement to help increase student achievement.	Completed as part of EDUC 802 Reading Development and Instruction and submitted with proposal. Will revise format to become shorter briefing-style paper to express the need for skill-based instruction to building administrators and teachers.	Spring 2016
2	Logic Model	Argument/Account	District office, Administrator and Teachers	This logic model explains the resources, activities, outputs, short and long-term goals and desired impacts need for a successful implementation of academic support in Brandywine High School.	Draft submitted with proposal	Spring 2016
3	Academic Support Observation tool	Product/Tool; Empirical Analysis	District, Administrators and Teachers	I will create this tool to align with the expectation of instruction aligned to academic support based on evidence-based practices and the logic model I will use this to assess the current implementation of skills and strategies in the Academic support classes at Brandywine High School. I will observe 5 teachers 1 time	Draft tool submitted with proposal	Tool completed Spring 2016; Observations and analysis completed by end 2016 Academic year.

Table 3.  
(Continued)

and summarize

				key findings. Following professional development, the tool can be adapted for use as fidelity of implementation tool (see below).		
4	Teacher Survey of Current Academic Support	Empirical Analysis	Brandywine High School Teachers (general and special education)	Teachers who have an academic support class in the Brandywine School District will be given this survey during the same time observations are being conducted to assess teacher's perceived needs for utilization of academic support. This will help to identify what the current needs are and what teachers feel are essential. This information will supplement the observations of academic support and taken into consideration when developing the District Expectations for academic support and professional development.	Draft tool submitted with proposal	Tool completed Spring 2016; Analysis completed by the end of the 2016 Academic School year.
5	District Expectations for Academic Support	Product/Tool	District, Administrators, and Teachers	There needs to be a shared set of expectations for the academic support class period so all students have the same opportunities for success at the secondary level.	Not yet created	Present as artifact at final defense

Table 3  
(Continued)

				This will be a statement on our special education website where all teachers, administrators and parents can access it.		
6	Resource Guide for Academic Support	Product/Tool	Teachers	This will be a list of curricular materials and programs that include skill and strategy instruction to help meet the needs of students in the classroom. This is intended to help guide special education teachers working in the academic support classroom to find curricular material that will help meet their student's needs. Once the resource is identified teachers can receive professional development on the implementation.	Not yet created, but in the process of researching the best evidence-based practices to teacher reading and math skill to students at the secondary level.	Present as artifact at final defense
7	Professional Development on Strategy and Skill Instructions	Product/Tool	Brandywine HS Academic Support Teachers	This will include how to implement and monitor skill and strategy instruction to ensure all student needs are being met and, if not, what changes must be made to do so. Delivered during Brandywine PLCs for special education starting	Not yet created	PD delivered Spring 2017; Outline of PD, related materials, and summary of teacher feedback presented as artifact at final defense

Table 3.  
(Continued)

				in the winter that occurs bi-monthly. Will include opportunity for teacher feedback		
8	Lesson Plan Template for Academic Support	Product/Tool	District Academic Support Teachers	This will be a Lesson Plan created for academic support Specifically to help teachers plan for their class period. Tool will be piloted with special education teachers who have an academic support period and refined	Not yet created	Develop Fall 2016; Present as artifact at final defense
9	Fidelity observation walk-through tool	Product/Tool	District Administrators, teachers	This tool will align with the lesson plan components and used as a walk-through tool so administrators (a) know what instruction they should look for when observing academic support, and (b) can hold teachers accountable for their instruction. Tool will be piloted in Spring 2017 classrooms and refined.	No yet created	Develop Fall 2016; Present as artifact at final defense.

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**APPENDIX B**

**SYNTHESIS OF SELECTED LITERATURE ON**

**LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Introduction**

Reading is an essential life skill. The ultimate goal of reading is to comprehend and make meaningful connections with text. Therefore, the development of skills needed for reading begins at an early age and progresses through stages into adulthood (Chall, 1996). Within the early stages of reading development, children begin learning and acquiring these specific skills. Moreover, many of the skills learned during early childhood are constrained skills. Constrained skills are the quickest to develop and master, such as decoding, fluency, and word recognition (Kintsch, 2004; Paris & Hamilton, 2009). As children acquire and become automatic in these reading skills, these constrained skills aid the child in a smooth transition to the later stages of reading development where there is a heavy focus on unconstrained skills. Unconstrained skills such as comprehension, vocabulary, and composition, continually develop over time making them much more complex with uncertainties of when or how they become automatic (Kamhi, 2009; Kintnsch, 2009; Paris & Hamilton, 2009). However, the acquisition of constrained skills in the early years aids the transition to these later complex stages of development. Therefore, the more quickly they are learned with automaticity, the better the chances a student has of becoming proficient in reading

comprehension (Benjamin & Shwanenflugel, 2010; Chall, 1996; Kintsch, 2004; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Paris & Hamilton, 2009; Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2011).

For some children, their movement through the stages will be fluid, and they will acquire the reading skills necessary for academic success and life through everyday classroom instruction. However, for many students with learning disabilities, acquiring and mastering the constrained skills within the framework of the typical classroom instruction will not come naturally. Struggling with early mastery can lead to poor reading comprehension at the secondary level where the focus is on content knowledge instead of the instruction of reading skills. Kamhi (2009) explained that 70% of students who lag behind would never be proficient readers. Additionally, among these students, three out of four who struggle to read in third grade will continue to experience reading difficulties as they progress through secondary school. For students with learning disabilities who struggle to master the skills necessary for reading complex text, they face the risk of becoming pigeonholed in Chall's (1996) *early stages of reading development*, and therefore, may never progress to become successful readers as they painfully struggle through the reading process at all levels of school (Lenz et al., 2004; Stanovich, 1986; Vaidya, 1999). Many of these students will be poor readers due to their lack of decoding, fluency, or word recognition skills, and therefore, will have poor comprehension. These lack of skills makes reading performance and achievement a primary concern for students with learning disabilities at the secondary level (Cowden, 2012; Gough & Turner, 1986; Harris et al., 2011; Paris & Hamilton, 2009; Sencibaugh, 2007).

As a result, secondary students with learning disabilities need an instructional environment to aid them in successful skill acquisition and transfer. Therefore, educators must be cognizant of the needs and strengths of their struggling students to meet their learning needs (Askell-Williams et al., 2012; Lenz et al., 2004). When a teacher can comprehend how a child learns, she can systematically teach students cognitive strategies so they can become independent learners. Students who use cognitive strategies to overcome textual challenges can then become metacognitive in their learning, and therefore, independent (Askell-Williams et al., 2012; Berkeley et al., 2011; Blachowicz & Fischer, 2000; USDHHS, 2000).

The ultimate goal of educators is for students to become literate, successful adults who will contribute to society. Educators must understand the process of learning and how their students learn. When this takes place, the teacher supports the students to understand their learning process and provides them with learning strategies to increase metacognition (Askell-Williams et al., 2012). At the secondary level, this is essential as there is an increased expectation for all students to meet the demands of the rigorous curriculum required for graduation (Deshler et al., 2006; Doren et al., 2014; Harris et al., 2011).

## **Challenges for Secondary Students with Learning Disabilities**

Students with disabilities comprise approximately 11% of the student population, and over half of this population are identified as having a learning disability (Lenz et al., 2004, p. 29). Learning disabilities, as defined by the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2014), are “neurological differences in brain structure and function and affect a person’s ability to receive, store, process, retrieve or communicate information” (p. 3). Furthermore, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) defines a learning disability as a disorder that affects one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written. Students receiving special education services under IDEA must demonstrate that their disability significantly impacts their learning. For many students who struggle to read because of a learning disability, they perceive and sense the impact their disability has on their learning.

Students with learning disabilities at the secondary level face many challenges, including emotionally, socially, and academically. This is especially accurate in the current educational climate where the inclusive environment reflects a high-level of rigor at a fast pace with slight support for students struggling with skill acquisition (Deshler et al., 2006; Hock et al., 2009; Lenz et al., 2004). Harris et al. (2011) reported that, as of 2007, over 8,000,000 adolescents identified with learning disabilities had not mastered the reading skills necessary to meet the rigorous demands of secondary schools. Many of these struggling students have not developed the skills essential for academic success. This lack of skills causes there to be an enormous gap between the skills a student with a

learning disability possesses and the skills they need for success at the secondary level. Due to the differences in skills, the gap expands instead of contracts, making proficiency in reading for students with learning disabilities an even bigger challenge at the secondary level (Deshler et al., 2006; Harris et al., 2011; Hock et al., 2009). As the gap continues to expand for students, the risk for potentially harmful outcomes increases, such as (a) students may show a lack of motivation toward reading because of their frustration, (b) students may have feelings of being broken and needing to be fixed while attributing their failures to their inabilities since they do not have the skills to be independent learners, and (c) students may struggle with skill deficits and have poor grades in subjects involving reading, which increases their risks of graduating without a standard diploma (Dorren et al., 2014; Hock et al., 2009 Lenz et al., 2004 p. 258).

Imagine a world in which no matter your effort, you seem to be unsuccessful every time, especially when compared to others around you. This is how many of these students feel facing tasks related to reading. These feelings can lead to downward spirals where the lack of skill acquisition leads to a larger achievement gap, known as the Matthew Effect, of the poor getting poorer (Stanovich, 1986). With such consequential risk factors for student success, it is essential to learn the types of support available to begin closing the gap. Students with learning disabilities can read. However, they are just not cognizant of the process necessary for success. Accordingly, this is where the role of the teacher becomes vital Teachers can aid students in acquiring and transferring the tools necessary to access missing skills needed for meaningful comprehension of text.

Hock et al. (2009) discovered that many students who identified as poor readers lacked proficiency in fluency, a constrained skill. Therefore, due to this skill deficit, the student struggles to become proficient in comprehension. One method to overcome this challenge is by teaching students cognitive learning strategies that allow them to confront reading directly. When struggling readers with learning disabilities at the secondary level are systematically taught learning strategies and are explicitly instructed on when to use each strategy, they can become successful independent learners (Lenz et al., 2004; Deshler et al.; Harris et al., 2011; Hock et al., 2009; Kintsch, 2004; Fritschmann, Deshler, & Schumaker, 2007; Vaidya, 1999). Therefore, explicit, systematic instruction in a range of cognitive learning strategies is essential to improving reading for students with learning disabilities at the secondary level.

**Cognitive Learning Strategies and How They Impact  
Reading Achievement and Metacognition  
for Students with Learning Disabilities**

The acquisition and transfer of learning strategies may be one of the most influential pieces in increasing reading proficiency for students with learning disabilities. A learning strategy defined by Vaidya (1999) is a “systematically thought out approach which enables us to get from one point to another” (p. 186). Cognitive strategies allow students to use methods and processes to confront a reading challenge independently (Berkeley et al., 2011; USDHHS, 2000; Vaidya, 1999).

For this paper, cognitive and learning strategies will be referred to as *learning strategies* with the understanding that the cognitive strategies are approaches to get from

one point to another. Learning strategies address skills taught explicitly through systematic instruction to help students with learning disabilities acquire and access grade level text in a meaningful way (Hoy & Hoy, 2013, Lentz, et al., date). The skills required at the secondary level demand a high level of reading proficiency in many subject area texts. For struggling students with learning disabilities, this can be a challenge. Strategy instruction can help reduce the frustrations associated with these challenges and empower struggling readers to become independent and proficient in the way they tackle rigorous demands.

Almost all learners use strategies to help them in the face of these challenges, although some are better than others at this task. Many students with learning disabilities struggle to know what process to use and when. Moreover, they must be taught explicitly these strategies because many of the students have not found effective ways to monitor their learning, and therefore, are unable to comprehend what is read (Lenz et al., 2004; Berkeley et al., 2011). Most of their time reading is spent on struggling and exerting all their brainpower to learn constrained skills with decreasing ability to comprehend the text (Benjamin & Schwanenflugel, 2010). Instruction in learning strategies can help decrease the time students spend struggling through constrained skills and increase their time making meaning of the text. When students have the tools to help themselves learn in the face of challenge, they become metacognitive and can understand their thinking and use the appropriate strategies to achieve their goals and evaluate their progress (Askill-Williams et al., 2012; Berkeley et al., 2011; Catts, 2009; Viadya, 1999).

Not only is learning strategy instruction important at the secondary level, but it is also essential for students with learning disabilities. Alexander and Fox (2011) argued that the neurological changes occurring in the adolescent brain create the best time for students to become cognizant of their learning. During this period of adolescence and due to an increase in gray matter, students can remember better by elaborating, accumulating large amounts of problem-solving strategies, and developing their ability to recognize text structures and features. This makes students with learning disabilities at the secondary level well-equipped to benefit from strategies that help them become better at independent learning. As a result, learning strategies taught explicitly can optimize the opportunity for academic success during the adolescent years to increase reading proficiency.

There are many learning strategies that can help students become successful readers. For this paper, I will go through a few in detail that are most influential in the acquisition of reading comprehension. Each strategy is taught explicitly through a multi-step process that includes when, where, and why students would use the specific strategy.

### **Morphological Analysis**

Morphological analysis involves the learning of words in their smallest unit, called morphemes. First, students learn these morphemes as prefixes, suffixes, and roots. They then learn how to break the word apart by its morphemes. Once this happens, they can identify the meaning of each morpheme in the word to understand the meaning of the word as a whole. Students who learned and utilized this strategy were more likely to increase their word learning and apply this knowledge to all subject areas (Harris et al.,

2011; Nagy & Hiebert, 2011; Nagy, Carlisle, & Goodwin, 2013). Word meaning is vital when trying to comprehend, but many students struggled through high-level vocabulary in text. Once students were proficient in this strategy, they could help themselves learn unknown words quickly to comprehend text.

### **Inference**

Making inferences helps students to create meaning of the text by identifying textual clues and responding to specific inferential questions as they take notes on what they know as they read. While reading through the text, students refer back to their responses from the inference questions, their contextual clues, and the notes from what they already learned to help cue their prior knowledge of the textual content. Students who received instruction in the inference strategy increased their ability to respond to inference questions derived from the text as determined by a pre- and post-assessment (Fritschmann et al., 2007). This strategy also helped students activate their prior knowledge to increase meaningful comprehension (McKeowin, Beck, & Blake, 2009; Paris & Hamilton, 2009) The importance of inference-making relates to the current curricular focus on high-level thinking skills established by the Common Core State Standards. The acquisition and generalization of this skill will help students with reading comprehension by encouraging students to think about what their reading means to them.

### **Self-Questioning and Visual Imagery**

In using self-questioning and visual imagery, students learned to self-chunk text into sections and either talk about what pictures they had in their head at the end of each chunk or asked what question they may have had about the text (Deshler et al., 2006). For

the self-questioning strategy, students learned how to ask an appropriate question. After instruction in both of these strategies, researchers demonstrated that students' comprehension scores significantly increased (Deshler et al., 2006). These strategies also encouraged students to reflect on what they had read to create a mental image or question, thereby helping students to use high-level thinking skills to create meaning of the text (Blachowicz & Fischer, 2000; Deshler et al., 2006; USDHHS, 2000)

Learning strategies that are taught in a systematic way help struggling students with learning disabilities at the secondary level to access and engage in the grade-level text in a meaningful way. The report of the National Reading Panel (USDHHS, 2000) also acknowledged the important impact that learning strategies have on the acquisition of reading comprehension. For students with learning disabilities, instruction in these strategies can have a strong impact on their reading and learning for positive outcomes in their post-secondary endeavors (Deshler et al., 2006; Lenz et al., 2004). Learning strategies impact how students with disabilities access text and equip themselves with the tools needed to overcome curricular challenges at the secondary level. It is important to note that for learning strategies to truly impact student achievement, they must be taught explicitly and systematically (Lenz et al., 2004). Teachers must instruct students on correctly using each strategy and teach when to use each strategy based on their needs for engaging with the particular text. Once this occurs, students have the means to overcome challenges presented by difficult text.

## **Conclusion**

The ability to read and comprehend text in a meaningful way is critical to success in life. For students with learning disabilities, attempting to overcome academic adversity as it pertains to reading can be constant, overwhelming, and exhausting. Many students will consistently put forth energy and effort, yet never yield the desired success. This repeated feeling of failure can ultimately lead to feelings of helplessness for students with learning disabilities (Grimes, 1981). Learned helplessness is a student's perception that their efforts have no influence their capability to learn; therefore, their ability is seen as fixed, and failure is inevitable. By the time struggling readers with disabilities reach the secondary level, they have given up on themselves as becoming competent readers. Their lack of constrained skills has hindered their attempts at success, and, therefore, they have always met reading tasks with failure.

Learning strategies provide students the ability to see reading as success through effort and the acquisition of skills to use when faced with challenges. This feeling of failure can decrease when students have ownership of their learning through learning strategy instruction. When students learn in what way to learn, they can engage and create meaning out of text through the use of higher-level thinking skills as independent learners (Askill-Williams et al., 2012; Berkeley et al., 2011; Sencibaugh, 2007; Viadya, 1999). Students that can effectively use learning strategies can become metacognitive, understand what they know and do not, and use strategies to help them face the skills that may have previously threatened them. When given the correct tools, students with

disabilities can overcome reading challenges to comprehend and create text meaningfully.

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## APPENDIX C

### ACADEMIC SUPPORT SURVEY

**Academic Support in The Brandywine School District**

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short & Long Term Goals	Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90 minute academic support period</li> <li>• Curricular materials</li> <li>• Coaching from Special education coordinator</li> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Common planning and flexible schedule</li> <li>• Special Education Teachers</li> <li>• Students (special education)</li> <li>• Admin support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development on instructional practices and implementation</li> <li>• Professional development on the instruction of academic skill development and implementation</li> <li>• Professional development in monitoring student progress in skill or strategy development</li> <li>• Establish clear expectations for the academic support block/period</li> <li>• Create and plan lessons for academic support that target specific skill or strategies instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher will provide quality skill and strategy instruction through well designed planning</li> <li>• Teacher implementation of instruction will be consistent through out all academic support classes.</li> <li>• Teachers will be able to monitor student progress and adjust their instruction based on student need</li> </ul>	<p>Short Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase teacher's knowledge in the areas of skill and strategy instruction</li> <li>• Utilize academic support to target student needs through teacher implementation of quality instructional practices (skills and strategy instruction)</li> </ul> <p>Long Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create consistency in academic support classroom instruction by targeting student needs through teacher implementation of instructional practices (skills and strategy instruction)</li> <li>• Teacher will decrease the amount of modification made to the general education curriculum for student with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close the academic achievement gap for student with disabilities in Brandywine High School</li> <li>• Increase the amount of students with disabilities graduating with a diploma</li> <li>• Students become metacognitive and independent learners</li> <li>• Student will have better success in their post secondary outcomes</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX D**  
**ACADEMIC SUPPORT SURVEY**

Academic support is a class designed to assist students identified with high incidence disabilities, such as learning disabilities or other health impairments, in gaining the skills needed to be successful in the general education classroom. The Secondary Special Education Coordinator of the Brandywine School District sent an electronic survey out to 69 special education teachers. Teachers who were asked to complete this survey must have taught an academic support class at the secondary school level. The goal of the survey was to (a) identify the teacher level of satisfaction with the implementation of instructional practices in the academic support class and (b) to understand better the challenges or barriers teachers face with the implementation of instructional practices during the academic support class.

**Participants**

I sent an electronic survey to the 69 special education teachers of all genders, age, and levels of teaching experience at the secondary school level that taught an academic support class. The secondary schools in the Brandywine School District are comprised of three middle schools (PS DuPont Middle School, Springer Middle School, Talley Middle School) and three high schools (Brandywine High School, Concord High School, and Mount Pleasant High School). Twenty-nine teachers out of the possible 69 completed and submitted a survey. All secondary schools are represented in the analysis. As outlined in

Table 4 below, the majority of responses were from PS DuPont Middle School, and Mount Pleasant High School. All teachers identified themselves with one of the six secondary schools except for one.

Table 4

*Survey Participation by School*

School	Count	Percent
PS DuPont Middle School	9	31
Mount Pleasant High School	6	21
Talley Middle School	5	17
Concord High School	3	10
Springer Middle School	3	10
Brandywine High School	2	7
Response with no school affiliation	1	3

*Note.* N=29

**Survey Method**

Each of the teachers completed a survey on their satisfaction of the academic support class. In the first part of the survey, teachers were asked to identify their level of agreement with ten statements about the academic support class through a Likert scale. Statements incorporated teacher knowledge and satisfaction of instruction as it related to the academic support class period. Teachers rated each item as strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, with the option to answer I am not sure. The last three survey items consisted of open-ended questions that related to the barriers and needs for instructional implementation during the academic support class. I created items through

informal observations of the current academic support class. The survey document is shown below.

### **ELP Academic Support Survey Instrument**

Stephanie DeMayo, the Secondary Special Education Coordinator at the Brandywine School District and a doctoral student at the University of Delaware, is asking you to fill out this survey about the Academic Support Class. All Academic Support Class instructors are being asked to participate in the survey. The survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

A summary report will be generated based on the information collected that may help guide professional development and restructuring of the Academic Support Class period. The report will be shared with district administrators and Ms. DeMayo's doctoral committee.

There are no risks to your participation. Participation is entirely voluntary, but your perspectives would be greatly appreciated. Please rest assured that all responses are confidential. You will not be asked for any identifying information, and none of your responses will be associated with you. Any responses taken from these surveys will only be reported in aggregate form. There are no consequences if you choose not to participate.

If you have any questions concerning the survey, please contact Stephanie DeMayo ([Stephanie.demayo@bsd.k12.de.us](mailto:Stephanie.demayo@bsd.k12.de.us)).

If you agree to participate in this survey, please press the "Next" button to continue or, if you are completing a print copy go to the next page and return your

completed form in the unmarked envelope that is provided.

For each statement about the Academic Support class indicate your level of agreement

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	I am not sure (5)
1. Academic Support is a good use of time to help my students to be successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I have clear expectations of what should be occurring during the Academic Support class period.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. General education teachers understand the purpose of Academic Support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. My administrators are supportive of Academic Support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I use Academic Support as a time to help my students complete unfinished or missing assignment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I use Academic Support as a time to help teach my students skills and strategies to support their learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I plan written lessons for my Academic Support class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I have enough curricular materials to meet the skill needs of all the students in my class during Academic Support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I need more training on curricular materials and skills that will help my students succeed during Academic Support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I am comfortable with understanding results from assessments used with my student to identify skill areas (10).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Please explain the barriers to the implementation of planned instruction during the Academic Support class.					
12. What will help you the most with the implementation of planned instruction during the Academic Support class and why?					

Figure 3. ELP Academic Support Survey Instrument

### Results

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize responses for items 1–10 (See Table 7). Open-ended responses were analyzed through coding process. Responses were

reviewed until key themes emerged (See Tables 8, 9, and 10). Overall, 86% of special education teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the academic support class is a good use of time. Ninety-two percent of teachers agreed that the academic support class time is used for assisting in the completion of core academic assignments. Eight-six percent of teachers agreed that they also spend time supporting student success through skill and strategy building. Overall, the survey reflected their agreement on the purpose of the academic support class as being a keystone in increasing the academic success for their students.

Areas in which teachers expressed dissatisfaction related to resources and training. Over half of the teachers surveyed (55%) responded they did not have enough curricular materials to meet the needs of their students. Seventy-one percent of the teachers agreed that they needed more training in the implementation of instructional practices to help build student skills and strategies to use. There is also a need, based on the responses, to further explore training for general educators as it relates to the purpose of the academic support class. In many schools, contents are put into silos wherein special education is one. Therefore, not all general education teachers have had opportunities to have professional development in special education and learn how the academic support class can increase student success in all subjects. Teachers were evenly split in response to item number 3 about whether general educators understand the purpose of the academic support class. Forty-four percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and another 44% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Therefore, professional development would

be beneficial for all educators so they can help special education students be successful through new instructional practices.

Table 5.

*Academic Support Survey Responses*

	Item	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		N	Mean	SD	I am not sure	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%				n	%
1.	Academic support is a good use of time to help my students to be successful	0	0.0	3	10.3	12	41.4	13	44.8	28	3.1	.68	1	3.5
2.	I have clear expectations of what should be occurring during the academic support period.	2	6.9	6	20.7	9	31.0	11	37.9	28	3.0	.96	1	3.5
3.	General Education teachers understand the purpose of the academic support class.	7	24.1	6	20.7	10	34.5	3	10.3	26	2.3	1.02	3	10.3
4.	My administrators are supportive of academic support.	2	6.9	3	20.7	12	41.4	9	31.0	26	3.0	.89	3	10.3
5.	I use academic support as a time to help my students complete unfinished or missing assignments.	0	0.0	2	6.9	19	65.5	8	27.6	29	3.2	.55	0	0.0
6.	I use academic support as a time to help teach my students skills and strategies to support their learning.	1	3.4	3	10.3	9	31.0	16	55.2	29	3.3	.82	0	0.0

Table 5. (Continued)

	Item	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		N	Mean	SD	I am not sure	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%				n	%
7.	I plan written lessons for my Academic Support class.	3	10.3	7	24.1	11	37.9	8	27.6	29	2.8	.97	0	0.0
8.	I have enough curricular materials to meet the skill areas of need for all students in my academic support class.	9	31.0	14	24.1	5	0	0	3.5	28	1.8	.70	1	3.4
9.	I need more training on curricular materials, skill and strategy building to help my students succeed.	1	3.5	5	17.2	11	37.9	10	34.5	27	3.1	.85	2	6.9
10.	I am comfortable with understanding results from assessments used with my students to identify skill areas to plan instruction.	0	0.0	6	20.7	12	41.4	9	31.0	27	3.1	.75	2	6.9

Note. N=29

A majority of teachers agreed they plan lessons for academic support (64%). However, this response may be skewed owing to the work I do with the teachers. Instructional planning is one of the areas I have concentrated on with the teachers. So, they may have been hesitant to admit they have not been lesson planning in fear that it would reflect negatively on their annual evaluation regardless of the anonymity of this survey. Three and a half participants did not show their level of agreement at all. The results from the open-ended questions are shown below in Tables 9–11.

The most common responses to the barriers of implementation related to resources, the varied skill level of students, and unclear expectations. The barriers overlapped with the resources that teachers identified as assisting in the implementation of instruction during the academic support class. The most common response about resource needs related to curricular materials, classes based on common ability level, and clear expectations.

Teachers responded that they lack both curricular and technological resources. Responses indicated that access to both curricular materials that match student need and technology would help with student success.

Table 6

*Barriers to Implementation of Instruction During the Academic Support Class*

Response	n	Percent
Lack of resources	10	34
Varied skill level	8	28
Unclear expectations	6	21
Scheduling	4	13
No response	3	10
Student absence/tardiness	1	3

*Note.* n=29

Table 7

*Needed Resources for Implementation of Instruction During the Academic Support Class*

Response	n	Percent
Curriculum	17	59
Clear expectations	9	31
Common skill level	7	24
Technology	4	14
Profession development	3	10
No Response	3	10
Planning time	2	7

*Note.* n=29

Table 8

*Additional Comments About the Academic Support Class*

Response	N	Percent
No response	18	62
Unclear expectations	5	17
Scheduling concerns	3	10
Professional development for general educators and building administrators	2	6
Lack of student motivation	1	3

*Note:* n=29

## Discussion

Access to curricular materials is a reoccurring theme throughout the survey. Of course, there may be many underlying reasons the teacher expressed this need throughout the survey responses. For example, secondary schools do not have a plethora of age-appropriate evidence-based practices for implementation in school. Further research should be done to identify curricular materials that are evidence-based, simple to implement and meet the needs of various student skill levels. Also, teachers do not necessarily know the resources required to teach the skills essential for student success.

Moreover, teachers identified that further professional development in the curriculum would be helpful with the implementation of robust skill and strategy building (as exhibited by responses in Table 9, 71%; Table 10, 10%; and Table 11, 6%). The school can address this area of teachers' needs through the use of a teacher resource toolkit accompanied by training on the resources to meet students' needs.

Another barrier to implementation of instruction based on teacher responses relates to the grouping of students. Twenty-eight percent of teachers responded that wide-ranging skill levels among students are a barrier to the implementation of instructional practices. Currently, most schools schedule students based on the master schedule instead of need. Therefore, there may be a wide range of skill level and need in any one academic support class. Many teachers' responses expressed concern about how to teach these numerous and differing needs in one class. Consequently, 24% of the teachers responded that grouping students by common skill area would best help with the implementation of instruction. These groupings could be a solution. Nevertheless, grouping classes based on skills needs requires that building administrators be willing to schedule special education students principally based on student data, such as student' IEP, data, and progress. Subsequently, the school would place each student in the academic support class based on their need. Although this is the ideal situation, many schools lack the resources and knowledge to bring this type of scheduling to fruition.

Of course, there is a chance that schools would group students by need based on perceived ability rather than actual data. If teachers perceive student deficits as unchangeable and stable, teachers may unconsciously lower their academic expectations.

Assumptions concerning lowered competence due to perceived ability rather than data can reduce the teacher's expectations for students in this population (Shifrer, 2013).

Thus, the academic support class would not look the same for all students.

As a result, there is a need for clear expectations of the academic support class. Twenty-one percent of teachers responded there were unclear expectations about how the academic support classroom should appear, what administrators and general educators believe it to be, and what students' might expect from the class. The academic support class is implemented differently from school to school and classroom to classroom. Eight-six percent of teachers responded they use the academic support class time for skill and strategy instruction. However, 92% of the teachers use this time to complete assignment and homework for the core content areas, which is counter to the goal of academic support: to assist students in the acquisition of skill development to be successful, with accommodation, in the general education class. This goal has not been transparent, and therefore, some general educators rely on special educators to use the academic support time to aid students with assignments and finish assessments rather than building skills to foster academic achievement. Since expectations have not been transparent, 3% of teachers reported it has been challenging to motivate students to participate. Some of the teachers' responses reflected lower expectations for the class because academic support does not provide a letter grade. For this reason, it will be critical to provide educators and administrators with professional development concerning the importance of skill-building in the academic support class.

Although teachers responded they had a high-level of satisfaction with the academic support classes, they identified areas that remain a work in progress. This information will help guide the future of the academic support class to ensure enhanced student success in closing the achievement gap.

## REFERENCES

- Shrifrer, D. (2013). Stigma of labeling: Educational expectations for high school students labeled with learning disabilities. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 54, 462–480. doi:[10.1598/rrq.21.4.1](https://doi.org/10.1598/rrq.21.4.1)

## APPENDIX E

### ACADEMIC SUPPORT OBSERVATION TOOL

#### Academic Support Observation Tool

Name/Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade ranges in class \_\_\_\_\_  
 Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of students: \_\_\_\_\_

There are Critical Teaching Behaviors used during the implementation of instruction to help ensure maximum use of instructional time and student achievement. Below are key behaviors that should be observed during instructional implementation of Academic Support Lessons.

**Rating Guide: 0= Not present 1=Present, but needs improvement 2= Present and correct**

Components	Observed Teacher Behavior	Rating	Comments
Preparation	Review data from previous taught strategy on generalization into inclusive classroom		
	Organized with appropriate materials for Clear learning outcomes		
Advance Organizer	Gains & maintains students' attention		
	Clearly defines the lesson or content previously learned States expectations for upcoming learning		
Lesson Presentation	Teacher models strategy, skill, or process (i.e., think aloud)		
	Skills or strategy instruction is explicitly/systematically present during the lesson. Paces instruction appropriately for group		
Enlist Student Involvement	Engages all students throughout instruction		
	Uses formative assessments to check for student understanding		
	Provides constructive feedback to expand and correct responses in group instruction Provides explicit & elaborated feedback on individual student work.		
Post Organizer	Reviews the learning from the day and promotes metacognition, involving students in the process.		
	States expectation for application skills or strategies learned to set the stage for generalization.		
<b>Grand Total</b>		_/28	

Adapted from DeMayo, Fagan, Mossburg 2015, adapted from Graner & Ehren 9/2004; Lenz and Graner 2/2001; Kea 1988.

*Note.* The academic support tool observation is used to assist in outlining the key teaching behaviors one would observe in the academic support classroom. This tool is specifically geared to teachers and has two prongs. This form outlines the expectations of systematically teaching a strategy or skill. New teachers who are in the statewide mandatory mentoring program can also use it as a tool to observe seasoned special educators to learn how to implement strategy and skill instruction into their academic support class.

**APPENDIX F**  
**ADMINSTRATOR, TEACHER, PARENT**  
**ACADEMIC SUPPORT FLYER**



**Brandywine School District Academic Support Class**

Brandywine School District Performance SAT 11th 2015-2016							
Group	Number in Group	Percent Proficient			Scale Score Mean		
		Group	District	State	Group	District	State
All Students ELA	623	62	63	52	513	514	490
Students with disabilities ELA	42	14	14	11	394	395	393
All Students Math	623	2	2	4	505	506	482
Students with Disabilities Math	42	2	2	4	380	381	394

**The Goal of the Academic Support Class is to:**

- Provide a structured classroom environment and routine for direct, explicit, systematic instruction of deficit skill areas of need based on data
- Plan and implement evidence-based lessons to promote the acquisition of skills and strategies
- Use and learn skills and strategies to support academic success in the general education content and curriculum.

**Expectations of the Academic Support Class**  
 Teachers are expected to:

- Use diagnostics to identify student areas of need
- Use evidence-based practices listed in the resource tool to directly teach skills and strategies
- Design lesson plans for instruction in provided format
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities to increase knowledge of how to meet student needs in the academic support class.
- Use key teaching behaviors to implement instruction

**Recommendations for Successful Implementation**

- No more than 15 students per teacher in a class
- Common Academic Support period
- Based on data, provide additional academic support class for those students who are struggling the most
- Use of the Academic Support Walk-through tool for evaluation

Figure 4. Administrator Flyer.



## Brandywine School District Academic Support Class

### Teacher Expectations for the Academic Support Class

Many students with disabilities at the secondary level lack the skills to meet the demands of the rigorous curriculum to fulfill graduation requirements. The struggle is intensified by a push for full inclusion with little support for skill and strategy acquisition. This is causing the need for heavily modified curriculum, so students are able to achieve albeit at a lower level of rigor. As the level of rigor is lowered, so are expectations resulting in an education that is not equitable for all students. Research shows us that the key to school completion for students with disabilities is the application of academic skills and strategies learned. When students learn skills and strategies, they are more likely to overcome textual challenges becoming more independent learners. Therefore, the need for a dedicated time for our students to learn skills and strategies to help with deficit areas is critical to their success.

### Goal of the Academic Support Class

#### The Goal of the Academic Support Class is to:

- Provide a structured classroom environment and routine for direct, explicit, systematic instruction of deficit skill areas of need based on data
- Plan and implement evidence-based lessons to promote the acquisition of skills and strategies
- Use and learn skills and strategies to support academic success in the general education content and curriculum.

### Teacher Expectations for the Academic Support Class

#### Teachers are expected to:

- Use diagnostics to identify student areas of need
- Use evidence-based practices listed in the resource tool to directly teach skills and strategies
- Design lesson plans for instruction in provided format
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities to increase knowledge of how to meet student needs in the academic support class.
- Use key teaching behaviors to implement instruction

Figure 5. Teacher Flyer.

## Brandywine School District Academic Support Class



### Academic Support

Many students with disabilities in middle and high school lack the skills to meet the demands in their core academic classes. For these students, a key to school completion is learning how to apply skills and strategies. When students learn skills and strategies, they are more likely to overcome academic challenges and be more independent learners.

### The Goal of Academic Support

The goal of Academic support is to:

- Teach students strategies to help support them in the general education classroom
- Promote a place where students can practice skills in which they struggle
- Create an environment where students explore how they best learn
- Discuss post-secondary goals, such as career, education/training needs, and skills needed to live independently
- Support students in the skill areas of need outlined in their Individual Education Plan
- Use research-based practices to teach these skills to promote student success.

### Who Can You Contact For More Information About the Academic Support Class

At the school, you can contact your child's:

- Special Education Case Manager
- Educational Diagnostician
- School Administrator

District contact

Stephanie DeMayo  
Secondary Special Education  
Coordinator  
302-793-5061  
[Stephanie.demayo@bsd.k12.de.us](mailto:Stephanie.demayo@bsd.k12.de.us)

Figure 6. Parent Flyer

## APPENDIX G



### HIGH LEVERAGE PRACTICES TO SUPPORT STRUGGLING STUDENTS (in RtI, 504 or spec ed)

	DEFINITION/PURPOSE	RESEARCH SUPPORT	PRACTICAL APPLICATION & EXAMPLES
<b>STUDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES</b>	<p>Must initially build positive student-teacher relationships to foster engagement &amp; motivate reluctant learners. The heart of positive academic outcomes.</p> <p>Teachers strive to connect Affective-Behavioral-Cognitive Engagement into one for all students</p>	<p>Marzano: 4 questions reflect essential components of engagement:  <i>How do I feel?</i>  <i>Am I interested?</i>  <i>Is this important?</i>  <i>Can I do this?</i></p> <p>Teacher sets purpose for learning</p>	<p>*Connect to students' lives – get in their world (cultural background, interests, hobbies, activities)</p> <p>*Teacher-led strategies: choral reading/responding, response cards, equitable participant system</p> <p>*Peer-assisted strategies: <b>PALS</b></p> <p>*Student regulated strategies: private system agreement, self-management tools</p>
<b>PRIORITIZE</b>	<p>Identify the most essential, powerful, equitable &amp; crucial learning outcomes using grade-level standards, assessment data &amp; learning progressions (access goals)</p> <p>Identify the greatest skill deficits &amp; develop 3-5 goals to address (improvement goals)</p>	<p>Extensive literature exists about the need for and success of instruction in foundational skills in conjunction with access to grade level standards.</p> <p><b>**RtI &amp; SB IEPs developed from this research: Tier I + Tier II</b></p>	<p>Understand essence of grade level standard, identify prerequisites &amp; foundational skills, and assess performance of both. Compare this to the learning outcomes prioritized. Work on both simultaneously, but during different times of the day (core instruction vs. DI / RtI block or academic support)</p>
<b>SYSTEMATIC INSTRUCTION</b>	<p>Sequence lessons that build on each other &amp; make explicit connections in planning &amp; delivery. Build background knowledge (instead of wasting time activating it) &amp; connect lessons to fit together in a systematic manner</p>	<p>16 elements of systematically designed instruction to include within &amp; across lessons/units; three core components: clear instructional goals, logical sequencing of knowledge &amp; skills, teaching students to organize content</p>	<p>Utilize everyday:                      Direct, Explicit Instruction (see below)                      Advance Organizers (<b>Reading Guides</b>)                      Concept Maps                      Focus on essence of standard (central ideas and concepts)                      Visual displays of content (text sets)</p>
<b>ACCOMMODATE DIFFERENTIATE</b>	<p>Students must receive strong access to CCSS in order to meet instructional goals &amp; CCSS; teachers make strategic decisions on essential curriculum elements, meaningfulness of tasks to meet goals &amp; criteria for showing mastery of content. Special educators <b>MUST</b> accommodate, differentiate and <b>only if necessary</b>, modify content in order to level the playing field for students with disabilities- not the same for all kids – must individualize!</p>	<p>Evidence for adapting materials &amp; tasks by substituting, simplifying &amp; highlighting;                      Graphic organizers-large effect sizes for comprehension; guided notes improve academic performance on note-taking and retention; students w/ mnemonic instruction outperformed peers on variety of learning tasks</p>	<p>Utilize 3 content enhancements:                      Graphic Organizers (Text specific)                      Guided Notes (<b>Reading Guides</b>)                      Mnemonics (web resource: The Mnemonizer and Spacefem's Mnemonic Generator)</p> <p>*letter strategies                      *keyword method                      *peg word strategies</p>
<b>COGNITIVE &amp; METACOGNITIVE STRATEGY INSTRUCTION</b>	<p>Teaches student <i>how</i> to learn!</p> <p><i>Cognitive</i> = applying strategy to a problem (making predictions, summarizing) &amp;  <i>Metacognitive</i> = selecting and/or monitoring effects of strategy (self-regulation, planning, monitoring)</p>	<p>Strategy instruction is an evidenced-based practice for teaching students w/disabilities to comprehend expository text, write, &amp; become more self-directed &amp; independent learners</p>	<p>Strategies are effectively taught through explicit instruction &amp; modeled through teacher Think-Alouds: organized lessons, modeling, guided practice, progress monitoring, feedback</p> <p>* collaborative strategic reading                      ~ Self-regulated strategy developmt (SRSD)                      + Enhanced anchored instruction                      + Solve It                      + schema-based instruction                      ^ keyword &amp; letter mnemonic strategies                      \$ self-monitoring &amp; SLANT</p>
<b>SCAFFOLD SUPPORTS</b>	<p>Providing temporary assistance to students so they can complete tasks successfully that they cannot yet do independently &amp; with a high rate of success; idea is to gradually remove them once they are no longer needed. Most supports are planned prior to lessons and some are provided 'on the spot' responsively during instruction</p>	<p>Grounded in theory that stresses interactions (with students &amp; text), ongoing assessment &amp; fading of supports as students become more independent.</p>	<p>Scaffolding is a strong component of: <b>INSTRUCTIONAL ROUTINES!</b></p> <p>*reciprocal teaching                      *collaborative strategic reading                      *POSSE                      ~SRSD                      ~Graphic organizers</p>

\*Reading strategy    +Math strategy    ~Writing strategy    ^Retention & memory strategy    \$Self-management strategy

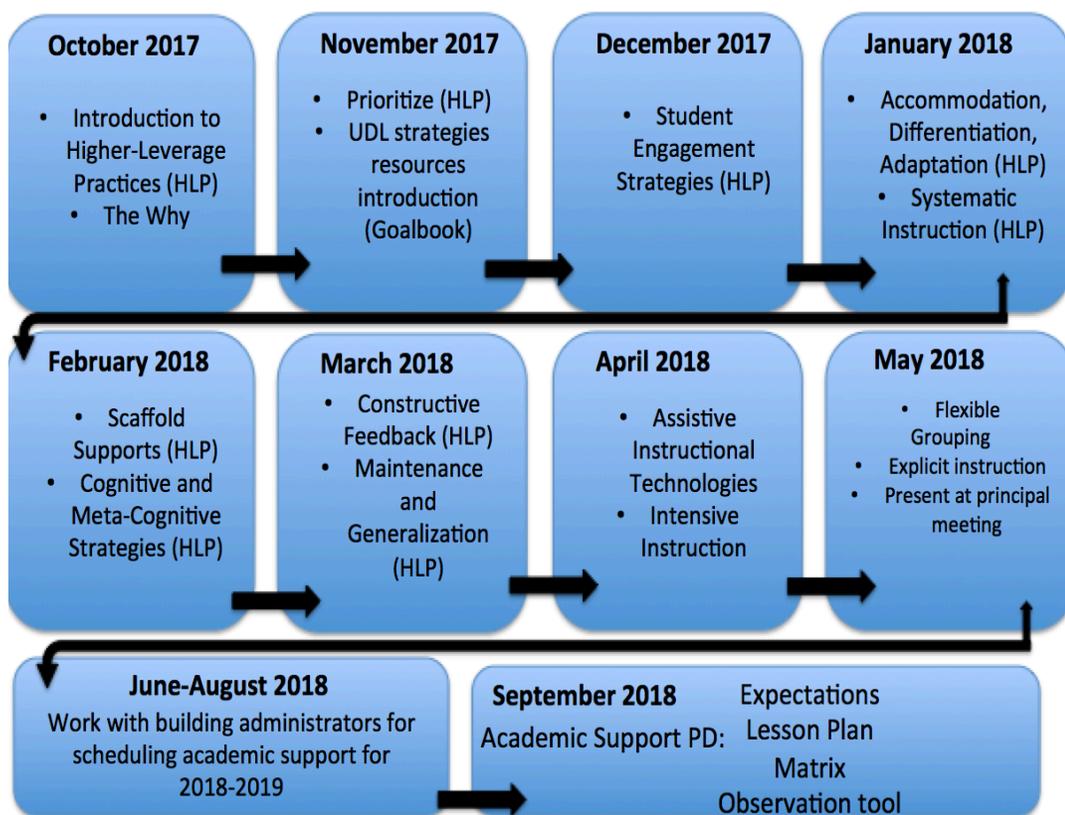
	DEFINITION/PURPOSE	RESEARCH SUPPORT	PRACTICAL APPLICATION & EXAMPLES
EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION	Showing and telling students (modeling and scaffolding) what to do or think while solving problems, enacting strategies, completing tasks and classifying concepts; utilized when learning new material & complex concepts / skills. Provide examples and non-examples coupled with language/vocab to facilitate understanding, anticipate misconceptions, highlight essential content and remove distracting information	Explicit Instruction (EI) is a set of teacher behaviors that have repeatedly shown to have a positive impact on student achievement, especially those struggling to learn. Elements of EI are operationalized & based on empirical studies spanning 40+ years.	6 fundamental teaching functions: -Review or build background knowledge -Present new content in small steps -Teacher Think Aloud -Use Guided Practice -Provide corrective feedback -Provide independent practice -Provide weekly/monthly reviews
FLEXIBLE GROUPING	Used primarily to accommodate learning differences, promote in-depth academic-related interactions & teach students to work collaboratively; teachers use procedures and structure to hold students accountable for collective and individual learning; monitor & sustain group performance through proximity & feedback	The evidence base on small group instruction - both homogenous and heterogeneous - is large, varies in rigor, and extends across multiple, related topics.	Homogeneous grouping is for intensive, focused instruction for students with <u>common instructional strengths and needs</u> for achieving short-term goals Heterogeneous (mixed ability) grouping is for all students to facilitate student thinking & communication skills of grade-level content-related conversations; also improve interpersonal relationships
ASSISTIVE & INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGIES	Used to support needs of students with disabilities, level the playing field and promote student learning and independence; teachers use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to consider multiple means of representation, expression & engagement when evaluating learning	There is empirical research base surrounding the use of technology to <u>support not replace</u> instruction for students with disabilities (CAST);	3 proven technology supports for SWD:  1) Augmentative & alternative communications systems (AACs) 2) Computer-aided instruction 3) Video self-modeling
INTENSIVE INSTRUCTION	Working with students of similar need on a small number of high priority, clearly defined skills or concepts critical to academic success; delivered by highly trained educators	It takes students with disabilities at least 10 to 30 times more repetitions to master a skill than a student without disabilities	Mimics description of Tier 2 & 3 instruction for RtI; smaller group size, many repetitions, changing instructional delivery or method
MAINTENANCE & GENERALIZATION	Retaining learned skills and concepts & applying them to new or different situations; <i>Maintenance</i> occurs when newly acquired skills are used in the absence of ongoing instruction. <i>Generalization</i> involves performing a behavior in environments that differ from teaching environments	There is extensive research on systematically programming for generalization and maintenance of new learning for academics and behavior/social skills dating back to 1977, and more recently in 2016.	8 techniques for generalization: 1-sequential modification; 2-intro of natural maintaining contingencies; 3-training sufficient exemplars; 4-training loosely; 5-using indiscriminable contingencies; 6-programming common stimuli; 7-mediating generalization; 8-training to generalize
CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK (LEARNING & BEHAVIOR)	Purpose is to guide student learning and behavior to increase motivation, engagement & independence; must be goal-directed; most effective when learner has feedback in relation to how he's performing toward a certain goal or skill	Emphasized in standards from seven professional groups including Nat't Board of Professional Teaching; Feedback is among the most powerful influences on student achievement!	Effective feedback: a) Is clear, specific, & timely b) Addresses faulty interpretations of content, not lack of understanding c) Emphasizes goal of learning & progress being made toward it; also what needs to be done to make better progress

McLeskey, J., M-D., Billingsley, B., Brownell, N., Jackson, D., Kennedy, M., Lewis, T., Maheady, L., Rodriguez, J., Scheeler, M. C., Winn, J., & Ziegler, D. (2017, January). Higher-leverage practices in Special education. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children & CEEDAR Center.



## APPENDIX I

### Academic Support PD Plan for 2017-2018



# Academic Support Higher-Leverage Practices

2017-2018 School Year  
Stephanie DeMayo-Secondary Special Education Coordinator  
Brandywine School District

## Data Supporting a Need

Brandywine School District Performance and Participation SMARTER Grade 11 2014-2015

Brandywine School District			Substate			
Group	Mean Scale Score	Percent Proficient	Participation Rate	Mean Scale Score	Percent Proficient	Participation Rate
All Students ELA	2603	59	95	2582	52	91
Students with Disabilities ELA	2460	5	91	2476	12	91
All Students Math	2562	28	94	2541	21	90
Students with Disabilities Math	2489	3	80	2488	2	70

## Data Supporting a Need

Brandywine School District Performance SAT 2015-2016

Group	Number in Group	Percent proficient				Scale Score Mean	
		Group	District	State	Group	District	State
All Students ELA	623	42	43	52	513	514	490
Students with Disabilities ELA	42	14	14	11	394	395	393
All Students Math	623	2	2	4	385	386	452
Students with Disabilities Math	42	2	2	4	380	381	394

## Addressing the Area of Needs

- By addressing the skill area of need, the teacher can close the achievement gap for students with disabilities (Lenz et al., 2004; Ried et al., 2013).
- Higher-Leverage Practices:
  - Collection of research from multiple decades that promote evidence-based strategies and best practices to support the success of learning for students with disabilities

## Higher Leverage Practices Supporting Successful Learning for Student with Disabilities

- 12 Research-based practices
  - 1) Student Engagement Strategies
  - 2) Prioritize
  - 3) Systematic Instruction
  - 4) Accommodate, Differentiate, Modify
  - 5) Cognitive & Metacognitive Strategy Instruction
  - 6) Scaffold Supports
  - 7) Explicit Instruction
  - 8) Flexible Grouping
  - 9) Assistive and Instructional Technologies
  - 10) Intensive Instruction
  - 11) Maintenance and Generalization
  - 12) Constructive Feedback

## Higher-Leverage Practices

- Student Engagement Strategies
  - Relationship-building
  - Purpose and goals for learning
  - The Why of Learning
  - Cultural competence
  - Compassionate Schools
  - Trauma Informed
- Prioritize
  - Most essential and crucial learning goals
  - Learning outcomes for grade level standards
  - Identification of greatest skill deficit
  - Improvement goals

### Higher-Leverage Practices

- Systematic Instruction
  - Explicit connection between planning and delivering
  - Building background knowledge
  - 16 elements
  - Three core components: 1) Clear instructional goals 2) logical sequencing of knowledge & skills 3) student organization of content
- Accommodation, Differentiate, Modify
  - Access to state standards to meet instructional goals
  - Showing of mastery of content through multiple modalities

### Higher-Leverage Practices

- Cognitive and Meta-cognitive Strategy Instruction
  - Cognitive- Apply strategy to a problem
  - Meta-Cognitive- Selecting and and/or monitoring effects of strategy
  - Self regulating, planning, modeling
- Scaffold Supports
  - Support for students in the beginning, so they can learn the task
  - Fading supports as students learn the skill
  - Used mostly in novel or complex content

### Higher-Leverage Practices

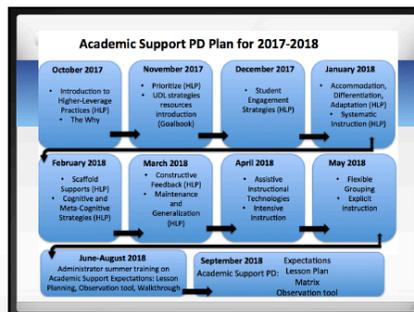
- Flexible Grouping
  - Promote in-depth academic related interactions
  - Teaching students to work collaboratively
  - Holds students accountable for group and individual learning
- Assistive and Instructional Technologies
  - Promotes student learning and independence
  - Supports the use of the UDL principles
  - Meant to Support not replace

### Higher-Leverage Practices

- Intensive Instruction
  - Working with students who have similar need in a small group
  - Skills worked on are clearly defined and directly related to academic success
- Maintenance and Generalization
  - Learning new skills or concepts and applying them to various learning environments and situations
  - Maintenance of skill is used in the absence of ongoing instruction
  - Generalization of skill is performing the the skill or behavior in different environments

### Higher-Leverage Practices

- Constructive Feedback
  - Guide student learning to increase engagement
  - Purposeful feedback in conjunction with specific goals and/or skill



### Resources

Lenz, B. K., Deshler, D. D., & Kissam, B. (2004). Teaching and academic diversity. In B. K. Lenz & B. R. Kissam, *Teaching content to all evidence-based inclusive practices in middle and secondary schools*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

McLeskey, J., Barringer, M-D., Billingsley, B., Brownell, M., Jackson, D., Kennedy, M., Ziegler, D. (2017, January) *High-leverage practices in special education*. Arlington VA: Council for Exceptional Children & CEDAR Center, 1-134. doi:10.1177/0040059917713206.

Reid, R., Lienemann, T., & Haganan, J. (2013). *Strategy Instruction for students with learning disabilities*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

## APPENDIX J

### Academic Support Lesson Plan



<b>Teacher:</b>	<b>Number of students:</b>
<b>Grade levels in Class:</b>	<b>Skill Lesson Addresses:</b>
<b>List Higher-leverage of practice(s) used to address skill:</b>	

<b>Lesson objective:</b>

<b>Materials</b>		

<b>Key Vocabulary for Lesson</b>		

<b>Activities</b>	
<b>Warm up:</b>	
<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Student</b>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
<b>Closing Activity</b>	

**Annotated Version Academic Support Lesson Plan**

<b>Teacher:</b> <i>Academic Support teacher</i>	<b>Number of students:</b> <i>Number of students in the class</i>
<b>Grade levels in Class:</b> <i>List the grade levels in the Academic Support class</i>	<b>Skill Lesson Addresses:</b> <i>The skill deficit area this lesson is going to address? (e.g., finding main idea, following multi-steps to solve a math problem)</i>
<b>List Higher-leverage of practice(s) used to address skill:</b> <i>The research-based practice(s) you will be using to teach this lesson based on the Higher-Leverage Practice Matrix</i>	

<b>Lesson objective:</b>
<i>The skill or strategy the student will know by the end of the lesson.</i>

<b>Materials</b>
<i>The materials needed to complete the activities and promote understanding of skill in this lesson.</i>

<b>Key Vocabulary for Lesson</b>
<i>The most important vocabulary the student needs to know to understand how to perform the skill or strategy</i>

<b>Activities</b>
<b>Warm up: &gt;</b>
<i>A way to get student's attention and engaged in the learning of the skill/strategy to come.</i>

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Student</b>
<i>List the activity step by step explaining what the teacher will be doing for each step and explicitly stating how the teacher will represent the material so all students can access.</i>	<i>List the activity step by step explaining explicitly what the student will do to demonstrate understanding of the activity.</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
<b>Closing Activity</b>	
<i>Formative assessments to identify if learning has occurred and use this information to move forward or identify areas in need of re-teaching.</i>	

# APPENDIX K

## ACADEMIC SUPPORT WALK-THROUGH

### EVALUATION TOOL

Form: Academic Support Walkthrough Form  
 Observation Date:

Grade:

Teacher:  
 Subject:

<b>Component I: Planning and Prep -Teacher uses data to determine, inform, and guide prioritization of students' unique needs</b>			
1. Unique need	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading decoding <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Fluency <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Comprehension <input type="checkbox"/> Written Expression	<input type="checkbox"/> Math Computation <input type="checkbox"/> Math reasoning/Problem Solving <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Regulations	<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Regulation <input type="checkbox"/> Self-determination
1a. Evidence	Evidence of district approved data collection tools (DAR, STAR, Math Reasoning Inventory, Psychological report, STARS, CARS, RTI, Teachers made progress data sheets aligned to goals to determine deficit areas). <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Evidence of curricular data collected to determine unique need (e.g., data collection tool reflect unique need based off of test, quizzes, projects, writing samples, transition assessments) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Use of Skill Area Need organizer to determine group and individualized needs <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
<b>Component II: Management -Teachers uses evidence-based practices to demonstrate management of student learning.</b>			
2. Practices	<input type="checkbox"/> Low student/teacher ratios (15:1 or lower per classroom) <input type="checkbox"/> Response cards <input type="checkbox"/> Choral reading <input type="checkbox"/> Student/teacher interaction <input type="checkbox"/> Centers	<input type="checkbox"/> Equitable participation system <input type="checkbox"/> Private system agreement <input type="checkbox"/> Self- Management Checklist <input type="checkbox"/> Reinforcement system	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear goals displayed <input type="checkbox"/> Attention to task <input type="checkbox"/> Peer assisted Strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Routines <input type="checkbox"/> Management of Transitions
2a. Evidence	To what degree did were teachers observe using the management practices listed above <input type="checkbox"/> Used none (0) <input type="checkbox"/> Used some (1-3) <input type="checkbox"/> Used many (3 or more)		

Academic Support Walkthrough Form

	Teacher instruction incorporates management practices that match the needs of the class. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
<b>Component III: Instruction Teacher uses evidence-based practices for direct teaching of specific skill and/or strategies in an explicit systematic manner.</b>			
3. Instructional practices student use and generalization	<input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Organizer <input type="checkbox"/> Concept Map <input type="checkbox"/> Graphic Organizer <input type="checkbox"/> Guided notes <input type="checkbox"/> Mnemonic Devices <input type="checkbox"/> Clear expectation	<input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced anchor instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Schema based instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Reciprocal teaching <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative strategic reading <input type="checkbox"/> Repetition <input type="checkbox"/> Peer assisted Strategies (PALS)	<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-teaching <input type="checkbox"/> Think aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Guided practice <input type="checkbox"/> Video self-modeling <input type="checkbox"/> Building background <input type="checkbox"/> Think aloud
3a. Evidence	Teacher demonstrates the use of 1 or more of the instructional practices listed above? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
3b. Materials	<input type="checkbox"/> SPIRE <input type="checkbox"/> Walpole <input type="checkbox"/> Read Naturally <input type="checkbox"/> Bookworms (MS) <input type="checkbox"/> STARS <input type="checkbox"/> CARS <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Rewards <input type="checkbox"/> Concept Maps <input type="checkbox"/> LIPS <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy Instruction	<input type="checkbox"/> Ten Marks <input type="checkbox"/> Dream Box <input type="checkbox"/> Math Navigator	<input type="checkbox"/> Self- Determination <input type="checkbox"/> Restorative Practices <input type="checkbox"/> Social Thinking/Social Skill <input type="checkbox"/> Video Modeling
3c. Evidence	Teacher demonstrates the use of a district-approved resource not listed above <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Name of Curricular Material used _____		

## APPENDIX L

### IRB/ HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL



RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Hollihen Hall  
University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware 19716-1551  
Ph: 302/831-2136  
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DATE: June 28, 2016

TO: Stephanie DeMayo  
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [914439-1] Academic Support Teacher Surveys

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: June 28, 2016

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # (2)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please remember to notify us if you make any substantial changes to the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or nicolefm@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.