

Beginning of the Year **Things to Do**

This suggested list of tasks is guidance toward making the rest of your school year organized and calm. If time is invested in these tasks at the beginning of the school year, you will then be able to gracefully and comfortably adjust to the unexpected throughout the school year. As you go through the process, you will be reminded of other things you find you need to do. See the last page for a self-created “To-Do” list. You will feel self-satisfied when you see all the things that you accomplish and check off.

Update

- Cane bank
- Library of assessments
- Library of lesson ideas
- Library of curriculum materials
- Make fresh set of Braille Go Fish cards
- Make a fresh set of Braille Uno cards

Subscriptions/Catalogs

Toss out the expired catalogs and make sure you have the current catalogs. Order extras of the catalogs you share with support teams. Request multiples of the APH catalog, so other team members can see what is available to them at their leisure. Keep one in your office and one in the car. If you have a place to leave your things in a building to use with a particular student, leave one there, as well.

- **American Printing House for the Blind (APH)**
(800) 223-1839 FAX (502) 899-2274
Please note: If your student/child is registered with APH through NMSBVI, all items may be obtained on a free long-term loan, unless there is a note of “Not on Quota” next to the product.
- **Vision Associates**
Kathleen Appleby, DBA
209 US HWY 90 West Ste. 170 #312
Lake City, FL 32055
(407) 352-1200 FAX (386) 752-7839
- **Independent Living Aids (ILA)**
PO Box 9022
Hicksville, NY 11802-9022
(800) 537-2118 FAX (516) 937-3906

- **Oriental Trading Company**
PO Box 2308
Omaha, NE 68103
(800) 228-2269 www.orientaltrading.com
- **Exceptional Teaching, Inc.**
5673 W. Las Positas Blvd., Suite 207
Pleasanton, CA 94588
(925) 598-0082 FAX (925) 598-0086 www.exceptionalteaching.com
- **National Braille Press**
88 Saint Stephen St.
Boston, MA 02115
(617) 266-6160 FAX 437-0456
- **Perkins School for the Blind**
175 North Beacon Street
Watertown, MA 02472
(617) 972-7308 FAX (617) 926-2027 www.perkins.org
- **Maxi Aids, Inc.**
(800) 522-6294 TTY (800) 281-3555 FAX (631) 752-0689
42 Executive Blvd.
Farmingdale, NY 11735
- **LS&S**
PO Box 673
Northbrook, IL 60065
(800) 468-4789 FAX (877) 498-1482 www.lssproducts.com
- **American Foundation for the Blind and Visually Impaired (AFB)**
11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300
New York, NY 10001
800-AFB-LINE (232-5463) afbinfor@afb.net www.afb.org
- **Harris Communications**
15155 Technology Drive
Eden Prairie, MN 55344
(800) 825-6758 (952) 906-1099
- **HearMore**
V (800) 881-4327 TTY (800) 291-3555 FAX (631) 752-0689 www.hearmore.com

- **LRS**
14214 S. Figueroa Street
Las Angeles, CA 90061
(800) 255-5002 FAX (310) 354-2601 www.lrs-largeprint.com
- **Deaf-Blind Perspectives**
Teaching Research Institute
Western Oregon University
345 N. Monmouth Ave.
Monmouth, OR 97361
www.tr.wou.edu/tr/dbp
- **DB-Link**
345 N. Monmouth Ave.
Monmouth, OR 97361
(800) 438-9376 TTY (800) 854-7013 FAX (503) 838-8150
dblink@tr.wosc.osshe.edu www.tr.wosc.osshe.edu/dblink
- **SenseAbilities** (Formerly See/Hear)
TSBVI - Outreach Program 1100 W. 45th. Street
Austin, TX 78756
www.tsbvi.edu

PR materials

- Create/Update note cards with your selected logo or the district's logo; use card stock buff to look like Braille paper – or a crisp white; these can be used for mailing notes to others, or a dressier note to others than the postcard.
- Create/Update post cards with your selected logo or the district's logo; use card stock buff to look like Braille paper – or a crisp white; these can be used for quick reminder notes to others.
- Order/Pack business cards in your car, tote, and somewhere accessible “on the fly.” This is particularly important for O&Ms during community lessons; keep them in your pocket or in your name badge for quick access.
- Put some of your business cards on magnets; these can be found at Wal-Mart and office supply stores. Parents find these most helpful.
- Create/Update fax cover page; keep it simple, too much do-dah will suck up ink
- Create/Update letterhead for you/your department

Review Your Files

Make certain that you have:

- Current photo releases
- Current release to remove child from campus/transport
- If you are working on a dossier; release to include each of your students
- Current Supplemental APH Registration

Note: These are most easily accomplished by collecting signatures during the student's IEP

Working Folders (yours - not the District's)

Suggestion: Use an accordion folder with a file folder; front all current information and Cheat Sheet; file folder, last year and other previous information; behind file folder all medical information

Note: If you have inherited a student with an extensive "working file," after reviewing the materials and compiling the necessary history for the background portion of your assessment report, you no longer need to access the original information. Leave the extensive history in the folder it came in, lock it up, and begin your own working file with the necessary information.

- Cheat Sheet
 - do it on a computer, so that you can shrink and paste to the calendar you carry
 - place one in the folder/binder you carry for the student's lessons/session notes
- Current IEP
- Previous IEP; just the previous year – the rest will be in a folder you don't drag around
- 9 week reports
- Annual reviews if different that the IEP evaluation
- Your report with severity rating scale and goal sheet
- All medical information related to the health of the student and his/her vision; if this student has an extensive health history, you will have already included it in your assessment report background and will not need to keep more than the current medical in the working file.

Travel Binders/Notebooks

Note: Do not carry your working file around. It should be kept in a locked cabinet. Your car is not suitable. You only need it at IEP time. If you keep a binder with your Learning Arc materials, Cheat Sheet, and Session Note Shell, you are ready for anything and will be able to answer any questions “on the fly” that come up.

- Establish Cheat Sheets for new students
- Update Cheat Sheets for existing students
- Update 9-week report shells for each student; if you have not done this before, start a file on your computer with the first set of 9-weeks, then have the reports for all the students in that file. If you do a 9-week file for each student, you will soon drown in computer files. I know it feels like a lot of paper, but the session notes write the 9-week reports and the 9-week reports write the IEP report. This way there are no surprises at the IEP meeting, for anyone.
- Update Session Notes shells; goals, service time, school, etc.
- Put Session Note shells in the binder for each student; it is easier to type up your plans than to hand-write the results. It eliminates repeating notes in several places
- Compile items for Learning Arcs/Curriculum for each student
- Emboss all the Braille Art that you plan to use for the year (30 copies of each per student is safe)
- Create all the seasonal “Happy Cards” for the year (20 cards of each per student is safe)

Setting Your Schedule

Look at the service levels of each of your students; using a desk/wall/window, etc. and post-its, lay out your schedule. Make a post-it for each time you need to see a student. For example, if the student is to be seen three times a week, there will be three post-its. Consider drive time, prep time, need for flexibility in community based lessons, time it takes to get in and out of a building, and the availability of the student; am/pm/specials/ancillary support. Plan office time and lunch breaks in your schedule. Most people prefer office time on Fridays and “floating” students on Wednesdays. “Floating students” are those who are not seen on a weekly basis, so the time slot can be alternated with other “floating” students. You will likely find that the schedule creates itself. On the note lines on the side of the calendar to be distributed, make a note of the scheduled visit, such as “Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00 – 2:15.”

Do not attempt to discuss scheduling with the classroom teachers until the second week of school. Well-meaning teachers will try to set a schedule with you the first week, but will quickly find that it no longer works. In the meantime, you have several other students booked and now you have to re-set their schedules. It is prudent, however, to check to see if the ancillary support people are assigned to a building on a particular day, impacting your scheduling choices. Once you have a service schedule that you and the team can live with, distribute the calendar of scheduled visits. Try to stick to it. People who change their “regularly-scheduled” visits often, are perceived as unreliable.

Also take the time to reintroduce yourself to ancillary staff and administration. Even if you are working in only one district, you are still a guest in the school buildings. Administrators may look too busy to care, but they will remember you as reliable and trustworthy if you take the time to say “hi” and let them know how things are going.

The Calendar of Visits can be found in this section of the web page. Save it to your computer, put your contact information on it, and then customize it for each student. To begin, put an X on the dates that you are not available for lessons; holidays, mandatory meetings, conferences, “sick days”, personal days, etc. A lesson not scheduled is a lesson not cancelled; if a student misses a lesson, you need not make it up. If you cancel a lesson, you must make up the lost time.

Then, if you have a color copier, color a master calendar for each student, duplicate, and distribute to the parent, Teacher, Principal, SpEd Director, attendance office (if appropriate), Instructional Assistant (if appropriate), and ancillary support members of the student’s team. If you don’t have access to a color copier, get your crayons/markers out and do it yourself; people respond better to colors than looking for a symbol. As you distribute your calendar to the team, give the principal, teacher, and person responsible for releasing a student to you in the front office a copy of the signed release to remove the student from campus/transport. They may tell you they already have a copy, and they may well have been at the meeting when the form was signed, but chances are, people have forgotten you have permission to do so. Giving out a copy of the release to all those concerned will eliminate anxiety for everyone and save you considerable time.

If there is a sign-in/sign-out page for you in the front office, put a calendar in there, too. This way, if there are any questions, the answers are there. The more “public” you are about what you are doing, the fewer “mysteries” people imagine.

TO DO

Yesterday:

- Collect school calendars; you will want to know when your student is not available due to school functions
- Set appointment for students due for initial evaluations and quickly upcoming IEPs
- Review working files; make sure all documentation is in place and has been sent to the district's SpEd Cum/state file; particularly releases to photograph and serve/transport
- Develop and send out "Beginning of the Year" letter
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Today:

- Set appointment for students inherited, but not yet due for IEP or evaluation
- Update: cane bank, library of assessments, library of lesson ideas, library of curriculum materials, make fresh set of Braille Go Fish cards, make a fresh set of Braille Uno cards
- Create/Update note cards
- Create/Update post cards
- Order/Pack business cards in your car, tote, and somewhere accessible "on the fly."
- Put some of your business cards on magnets
- Create/Update fax cover page
- Create/Update letterhead for you/your department
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Tomorrow:

- Set up students who need evaluation in the next couple months
- Establish Cheat Sheets for new students
- Update Cheat Sheets for existing students
- Update 9-week report shells for each student
- Update Session Notes shells; goals, service time, school, etc.
- Put Session Note shells in the binder for each student's "lesson" binder/folder
- Compile items for Learning Arcs/Curriculum for each student
- Emboss all the Braille Art that you plan to use for the year (30 copies of each per student is safe)
- Create all the seasonal "Happy Cards" for the year (20 cards of each per student is safe)
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Next Week:

- Pursue paperwork on pending evaluation requests
- Set schedule for all students
- Develop and distribute Calendar of Visits for each student
 - Parent
 - Teacher
 - Principal
 - SpEd Director
 - Your working file

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