Creative Ideas: Enhanced to Meet Special Needs of Students

INTRODUCTION

The Curriculum Center for Family and Consumer Sciences has produced instructional guides for all Family and Consumer Sciences courses. Within the guides, each instructional strategy has been given a number and header designation to facilitate ease in locating specific strategies and identifying at-a-glance what general methodology is involved. In addition, each guide contains a **Creative Ideas** section that provides ideas for implementing various strategies in ways that promote active learning, address multiple learning styles and needs of students, and save teacher time.

The **Enhanced Creative Ideas** provided in this document are intended to provide additional guidance for meeting special needs of students when utilizing specific instructional strategies. Each topic below corresponds to a strategy header within all instructional guides.

We realize that the suggestions are very generic. Many specific accommodations will need to be made for students with specific and severe disabilities. However, many generic principles of modification for students with special needs are threaded throughout the suggestions, and these principles for the most part echo general principles of good teaching. In the inclusive classroom, all students can benefit from the preparation and clarification that are essential to facilitating the learning process for students with special needs. Following are examples of these generic principals:

- Set aside time to develop a plan and prepare lessons. Use of upfront planning is critical to success.
- Prepare students in advance for each learning experience. Clarify expectations upfront. Provide a rubric or checklist and make sure students understand grading. Through direct instruction, help students identify exactly what to expect in a learning experience.
- Assume strong leadership in implementing each type of strategy. "Lead" students in brainstorming, "lead" students to discuss, and "guide" students through research or Internet searches.
- Break down complex assignments and provide step-by-step directions.
- Use a variety of teaching strategies and materials to help students learn information in different ways and address varying learning styles.
- Utilize effective group learning, teamwork, and peer tutoring. Use contrived grouping based on students' strengths and abilities. Develop a cooperative learning environment so students feel safe to ask questions and receive help from their peers.
- Introduce a new strategy for the first time by providing specific direction and examples; teach students how to participate in the strategy and tie to students' previous experience. For example, they have used Venn diagrams since elementary school, but they may need help in transferring that skill to new content.
- Cover new vocabulary words prior to implementing a strategy. Provide a written word bank when appropriate.

- Check for understanding during and after each learning experience. Review key points and reteach as necessary.

- Implement higher order thinking skill strategies. Although strategies that require higher-order thinking skills may present challenges for students with special needs, take specific steps to help students succeed in these strategies, because these are typically valuable, real-world skills that students need. Upfront preparation, guided assistance, group structuring, and peer tutoring can help foster success.
- Consider how each type of strategy impacts students with specific needs, and determine upfront ways to support those students. For example, audiotapes will pose inherent challenges for students with hearing or audio-processing impairments.
- Become familiar with special education resources and resource personnel available, and utilize these to the maximum.
- Utilize resources provided by support staff (such as special education staff or 504 staff); gather information and resources through conferencing or collaboration with support staff.
- If a student qualifies for special education services as a student with a disability under IDEA legislation, view the student's individual education plan (IEP) for present levels of proficiency (PLOPS), goals, objectives, and accommodations for the current course. Based on the student's IEP, consider accommodations in the classroom setting. Students who qualify for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or other programs may also have individual accommodation plans that must be implemented.
- Structure the environment and closely monitor transition times. Keep a daily/weekly schedule on the board. Utilize classroom/campus rules
- Help students with organizational skills such as a homework folder or notebook, time tracker, or agenda book.
- Develop home-school relationships.
- Provide feedback to campus educational staff. Family and Consumer Sciences teachers are uniquely qualified to contribute to students' education by providing insight into ARD and 504 meetings. Emphasize ways students learn and present strategies and modifications that are easy to apply and promote learning for students with specific special needs.

AUDIOTAPE: Consider how to support students who have hearing impairment or difficulty with audio processing, reading, or written expression. Provide a transcript of the audiotape for students to read along with the tape. Provide direct questions or topics, one-page summaries, vocabulary previews, or outlines to guide student listening. Preview the tape to be sure it is articulated slowly and clearly. Tapes need to be short or stopped frequently to help students maintain their attention level. Provide clear introductions and end with open discussions to identify problem areas or the necessity of reviewing the information. A possible resource person for developing audiotapes and transcripts is the school librarian; students who need volunteer service hours for organizations or classes might also be enlisted to produce written transcription.

BRAINSTORMING: Students need to be led in brainstorming. Provide clear directions and topics to guide the session. Prior to the brainstorming activity, preview vocabulary and provide preview questions or one-page summaries on the topic. Divide the class into small brainstorming groups so that all students feel safe to contribute. To keep a few students from monopolizing input, limit the number of times each student contributes to the session. For example, give each student five M&Ms. Each time a student contributes to the brainstorming, he/she gets to eat one M&M; when the M&Ms are gone, the student must be quiet. Encourage all students to use all their M&Ms; they cannot eat their M&Ms without contributing.

CASE STUDY: It may be difficult for some students to develop their own case studies. Start off by providing case study examples to students. Watch the vocabulary and reading level; provide a word bank for difficult words and teach new words upfront. Provide direct questions to help students work through the case study and to help them identify the key or relevant information. As students learn to develop their own case studies, structure the activity in group/cooperative learning. Provide examples and/or offer direct questions to guide students in the development of the case studies.

CLASS DISCUSSION: Prompt students ahead of time about questions that will be asked so they will have time to think about answers. Questions might be listed on the board or overhead prior to the discussion. Provide visual aids to help students understand the concept being discussed. Ask direct questions of specific students to help guide the discussion, and encourage all students to participate in the discussion.

DEBATE: This is one of the higher-order-thinking strategies, which will be challenging for many students to reach. Break down, step-by-step, directions on how to conduct a debate. A debate or speech teacher might serve as a resource to help teach students how to debate. Refer to the teaching aid, ***Guidelines for a Classroom Debate***, that is provided in each instructional guide. Structure of the debate teams, preplanning, and rehearsal are critical for enabling students of varied abilities to participate successfully. Have each student contribute a limited number of points, such as two to three. Allow students to use note cards or visual prompts to guide the debate. Allow students to rehearse as needed to help them feel comfortable when presenting their points during the debate. Assign roles to debate team members to help them know what they are supposed to be doing for preparation, during the actual debate, and following the debate.

DEMONSTRATION: Provide students written notes, outlines, vocabulary previews, visual representations, or reviews of important facts prior to the demonstration. Keep the demonstration simple. Demonstrate one to two steps, and then have students discuss or practice the activity demonstrated. This is a good strategy to partner with other strategies to help students learn by watching and doing.

EDUCATIONAL TOUR: Prepare students by identifying what they will be seeing, doing, and hearing. Provide key questions or topics to help guide students' attention during the tour. Let parents know about the tour in advance so they can help students prepare for the different activities in which they will be involved as they go to, attend, and return from the site. Pair socially strong and weaker students to make the tour a fun learning experience for all students.

GAME: Have students work together to review prior to the game. Structure the game so that all students can participate. Provide visual clues to help students identify when it will be their turn. Provide clear, concise directions so that the students know what is expected of them and how to participate.

GROUP ACTIVITY: Use contrived grouping based on students' abilities and strengths. As a rule, the teacher needs to determine the most effective group structures. The subsection on Group Activity/Teamwork in the **Creative Ideas** section of each instructional guide provides many ideas for randomly grouping students; these can be adapted to control group assignments. Assign roles within each group. Change the groups frequently to foster friendships and enable relationships.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER: Graphic organizers are good visual ways to help students separate and combine information. Use organizers with which students are familiar, such as Venn diagrams and web organizers. If introducing a new graphic organizer, teach how the organizer works and help students identify the various components. Use these in conjunction with other strategies to help students map the information and identify key or relevant information.

GUEST SPEAKER: Prepare guest speakers in advance to work with students who have special needs so they will know what to expect. Ask the speaker to provide hands-on examples to help students grasp abstract concepts. Prepare students in advance by outlining topics that will be covered and/or providing questions to guide students' attention. Follow up by reviewing key points covered and checking for student understanding.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY: Provide clear, concise directions. Provide a visual with the directions so that students can refer back as needed. Repeat directions as needed. Monitor students closely to be sure they are on track and doing what they have been directed to do. Use peer tutoring for various portions of the activity.

INTERNET SEARCH: Upfront planning is critical. Research sites ahead of time to be sure Web sites work and have easy links. Look for Web sites that have accessibility icons that provide links to aids. Provide clear topics and specific instructions to guide students in the search. List Web sites with step-by-step directions for how to get to each site and identify relevant

information. A computer technology person is a good resource for developing Internet search activities. Use of graphic organizers can help students separate and identify relevant information.

INTERVIEW: Allow students to record the interviews as needed to help them remember important information. Paired grouping helps students who are timid or have trouble talking to unfamiliar people. Provide direct questions to guide the interviews. Limit the number of questions as needed and provide scribes to help students write interview responses. Assume leadership in planning for interviews; i.e., select persons to be interviewed to ensure positive experiences for students. Build in opportunities for interviewing individuals on the school site; there are a number of persons with varied expertise on site.

LABORATORY EXPERIENCE: Consider gross and fine motor skills of individual students, and provide specific accommodations/assistance as needed. Post directions for easy referral. Prepare students in advance so that they will know what to expect. Provide step-by-step directions or checklists to help students identify the completion of various aspects of the experience. Highlight portions of the experience by having students explain to someone outside the group what they are doing and the benefits of the particular activity.

OBSERVATION: Use contrived groups or peer tutoring based on students' strengths and abilities. Have students role-play what they will be seeing to help students identify observed activities and to identify proper observation methods. Provide direct questions or a specific list of observation topics to guide students' attention and help them identify the relevant information observed.

ORAL PRESENTATION: Set clear expectations upfront for the oral presentation; provide a rubric or checklist and make sure students understand grading. Use contrived grouping or peer tutoring based on students' abilities and strengths. Divide the class into listening teams to promote focus and attentiveness; make sure students understand how to be a good audience when others are presenting. Assign roles to group members so that all students know what is expected of them when presenting or being an audience member.

PANEL DISCUSSION: Prepare panel members in advance to work with students who have special needs so they will know what to expect. Ask panelists to provide hands-on examples to help students grasp abstract concepts. Use guided questions, and prepare students by talking about questions ahead of time. Give students an outline of topics and/or questions to guide students' attention during the panel discussion. Follow up by reviewing key points covered and checking for student understanding.

PROBLEM SOLVING: This higher-order, real-world skill requires preplanning, structure, and specific direction. Provide examples for students to follow, and show them a sample end product. Provide all information they will need beforehand. Provide visuals of the problem-solving process and the expected outcomes. Establish step-by-step directions to structure the students' problem solving tasks and to guide them to an appropriate solution.

PROJECT: Set clear expectations upfront for the project. Provide rubrics that define project criteria and help students identify what they must accomplish for the desired grade. If materials are needed, these may need to be provided for students; seek help from special education resource persons. Provide step-by-step direction, and establish intermediate deadlines to monitor students' progress and to provide multiple grading opportunities. Modify project criteria to meet individual needs. Use paired projects and peer tutoring when appropriate.

RESEARCH: Provide specific starting points and direct topic selection. Have specific resources available to help guide students in selecting relevant information. Provide key questions to guide students in their research. Establish step-by-step directions or checklists to help students identify the necessary parts of the research tasks. As needed, use classroom time or schedule time in the library or computer lab.

ROLE PLAY: Students are generally familiar with role-plays. When using for the first time, link the activity to students' past practice. These can be used in conjunction with multiple strategies to help students prepare for upcoming events, identify relevant experiences, and demonstrate learned knowledge.

SCENARIO: It may be difficult for some students to develop their own scenarios; have some available from which students can choose. Make sure vocabulary and reading level are appropriate; provide a word bank for difficult words and teach new words upfront. Provide direct questions to help students work through the scenario and to help them identify the key or relevant information. If students are developing their own scenarios, divide the class into groups and develop group scenarios. Provide examples and/or offer direct questions to guide students in the development.

SKIT: Students are generally familiar with skits. Skits can be used in conjunction with multiple strategies to help students prepare for upcoming events, identify relevant experiences, and demonstrate learned knowledge. Prepare students beforehand for the activity; preteach as necessary. State expectations clearly. Use contrived grouping for the activity, and structure groups for the success of all students.

SURVEY: Provide multiple practices in class to help students know what to expect. Use role-plays to help students become comfortable with conducting surveys. Provide guiding questions and clear directions. Teach students how to design surveys, what types of questions to ask, and what things to consider. Discuss specific issues related to sensitivity, confidentiality, and privacy. Prior to conducting a survey, have students brainstorm possible results to help students identify relevant information. Peer tutoring is an additional aid for this type of activity.

SYMPOSIUM: Structure is critical to success. Students need to know which students comprise the audience and which students are involved in the symposium. The teacher needs to know where the symposium should end up, and how to specifically prepare students for that result. Use role-plays to help students understand their part in the symposium. Use peer-tutoring to help students with portions of the symposium. Provide guiding questions and directions to help students know what to expect and how to participate.

TEAMWORK: Assign teams based on members' abilities and skills. Use peer tutoring, mentoring, or peer helpers when appropriate to specific assignments. The subsection on Group Activity/Teamwork in the **Creative Ideas** section of each instructional guide provides many ideas for randomly grouping students; these can be adapted for contrived grouping. Assign roles for team members so that students know what to expect and what to do. Students are generally familiar with this strategy. This is a good strategy to use in conjunction with other experiences.

VIDEOTAPE: Consider how to support students who have visual or audio impairments. A good audio system is especially important for students with visual impairment; students with auditory impairments may need closed captioning or a written outline. Preview the videotape prior to structuring the activity. Provide guiding questions to help students identify relevant information. Help students tie the information from the video with the learning outcomes. Following the video, discuss the information to identify the need to review or reteach the information. Intermittently stop the video to allow students to refocus and emphasize key points.

VISUAL DISPLAY: Consider how to support students who have visual impairments. Set clear expectations upfront for the visual display; provide a rubric or checklist and make sure students understand grading. The make-up of teams is critical to success of students with special needs. Assign responsibilities for completing the visual display; use contrived grouping or peer tutoring based on students' abilities and strengths. Provide step-by-step directions or checklists to help students identify the successful completion of various aspects of assigned tasks. If materials are needed, these may need to be provided for students; seek help from special education resource persons.

WRITTEN EXERCISE: Consider how to support students who have visual impairments, audio-processing needs, physical impairments, or problems with written expression. Provide alternative tools, such as word processor, typewriter, audio recorder, scribe, or a note taker, as needed. Be flexible if the student can respond better verbally; allow this alternative or provide a scribe to write down verbal responses. Allow extra time or shorten the required length of assignments as needed. Guide students in the process of developing an idea for writing, and then help outline or develop sequence cards on the topic. Utilize skills such as mapping, identifying key words or ideas, or using diagrams to develop the writing plan. Provide opportunities for editing and feedback at each stage of writing. Accept alternate forms of written response, such as audio recording or oral response.