

# The Worst Kept Secrets for Successful School- BCBA Collaboration

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How about a show of hands?







# Motivating Human Service Staff

*Supervisory Strategies For  
Maximizing Work Effort  
and  
Work Enjoyment*

Second Edition



Dennis H. Reid and Marsha B. Parsons

VOLUME 3

BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS APPLICATIONS  
IN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERIES



# Collaboration with School Teachers

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- Assumptions
  - The information in this presentation is directed towards those who have long-term professional relationships with teachers, rather than short-term consultation.
  - When I use the word “teachers,” I am referring to anyone who might interact with the child in a school setting—teachers, paraprofessionals, principals, OTs, PTs, SLPs, social workers. I am referring to anyone with whom you might collaborate within a school setting.



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# Two Case Examples



## Sally the Special Education Teacher

- First year teacher
- Just graduated top of her class from a local state school
- Enjoys the eclectic approach of special education
- Believes strongly in sensory integration
- Nervous about proving herself to her new school and her new colleagues
- Given a caseload of 12 students with moderate to severe impairments and severe challenging behavior

## Gerald the General Education Teacher

- 20 years of experience teaching middle school
- Specializes in math and science
- Frustrated with the new math curriculum selected by his district
- With 28 kids, he doesn't have time to give 1:1 attention to any one kid.
- In recent years, classroom behavior management has been a struggle
- Tries to keep to himself and avoid the attention of administration
- Avoids teacher socialization





Worst Kept Secret #1: Behavior  
analysts talk funny!





## Tip: Try to avoid talking like a behavior analyst

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- It's a good idea to control your vocal verbal behavior and let the audience control your behavior a bit.
- Your behavior analytic jargon can:
  - Make a teacher feel belittled
  - Be offensive
  - Be confusing





# Some problematic terms

BA Term	What we mean	Interpretation
Punishment	Any stimulus that, when applied contingent on a response, reduces the future probability of that response.	Being mean, corporal punishment, yelling at children
Reinforcement	Any stimulus that, when applied contingent on a response, increases the future probability of that response.	Giving kids edibles, token economy.
Stimulus	Anything that can be perceived in the environment	Huh?
Mand	A request	Huh?
Vocal Verbal Response	A vocal utterance	Okay, I get it, but can't you just say "word?"





# A tip about your language...

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- Either clearly define your terms if you insist on using them, or...
- Talk more like a teacher. Explain the problems, intervention, outcomes, in language they can relate to.



Worst Kept Secret #2: Teachers are pretty eager to get to intervention. They don't like spending a ton of time in assessment.





## A few tips:

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- Work with the teacher to prioritize the most challenging cases
- Provide estimated timelines for the assessment process
- Update the teacher regularly as you progress through the assessment process
- Avoid analysis paralysis



# Motivation





# Teacher Motivation

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- Lack of motivation
  - Poor outcomes for students
  - Unsatisfied teachers
- What is “motivation”?
  - Vaguely defined when used to target poor teacher performance
- Without a clear definition of “motivation,” it is difficult to motivate teachers



“Motivation:  
working hard and  
enjoying it”

(Reid & Parsons, 2006)





Worst Kept Secret #3: Most or all teachers went into the field because they love kids and want to help them succeed.



Worst Kept Secret #4: Teaching is really hard work. It is a complex and often thankless task.





# Some Context

Working in human service organizations is a different “animal”

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- Nature of the job: Often there is not a clear and objective “bottom-line” index of performance/effectiveness
  - Thus, there are ambiguous determinations of the school’s and teacher’s performance
  - High stakes test = the best measure? = high stress
  - There is often disagreement on what the best measure is
  - If this is unclear, teachers rarely experience the reinforcement of goal attainment
  - Thus, they just do the same things over and over



# Some Context

Working in human service organizations is a different “animal”

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- Nature of the workforce:
  - We are fortunate to be working with people with some pretty good training (bachelor's and graduate degrees)
  - However, many teachers feel unprepared in many areas
    - Supporting children's mental health needs (Reinke, Stormont, Puri, & Goel, 2011)
    - Somewhat prepared to teach early reading skills, but their skills are not matched to the research literature (Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001)
    - Classroom management (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012)
    - Mainstreaming and dealing with children with disabilities (Scruggs & Mastropeiri, 1996)
    - Teaching in urban settings and with ELLs (Siwatu, 2011)





# What does this mean for motivation?

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- Some of these characteristics of the human service context mean that staff motivation could be a problem
- “The negative implications regarding motivation should not be considered as a negative commentary on the people themselves who work in human service jobs” (Reid & Parsons, 2006, p. 13)
- “The staff are not at fault—the work environment is at fault for not motivating the staff.” (Reid & Parsons, 2006, p. 13)
  - New vs. seasoned employees



Worst Kept Secret #5: YOU, as a consultant, and how you behave are part of that environment. Your behavior influences that of those in the school environment.





Too often we go hard on people and easy on the problem. What we need to do is go easy on the people and hard on the problem.

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Paraphrased from Pat Friman, BABAT Presentation, 2015



# Teacher Motivation

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- Our job as consultants?
  - Ensure that teachers are working diligently to implement our recommendations
    - To change and maintain staff performance
  - Ensure that teachers enjoy implementing the interventions that we recommend





# Outcome Management

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- Adopt an outcome management approach to your consulting task
  - Specify outcomes that are desired for the children
  - Specify staff performances that are necessary to attain these outcomes (create clear programs and task analyses you can use for fidelity checks)
  - Monitor staff performance to provide information for decision making
  - Train staff to perform the skills
  - Provide supportive feedback and positive responses to maintain desirable performance, as well as corrective feedback for incorrect performance



“A primary component of a supervisor’s job is to find positive means of making the work environment motivating for (the teachers with whom they consult).” (Reid & Parsons, 2006)

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- How do we know what is enjoyable to teachers?
- How can we get access to this information?
- Values?
- Etc.?





# Teacher Preference Assessments

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- Look for cues to conduct natural preference assessments
- Teacher photos on her desk, preferred pen brands, look around her room for patterns in décor or collections of sorts
- Ask!



## Worst Kept Secret #6:

Teacher behavior is responsive to reinforcement

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- “Supervisors themselves can represent a good thing in (teachers’) work environment” (Reid & Parsons, 2006)
- What can you do to make the environment more reinforcing for that teacher?



# Examples of Appropriate Reinforcers to Motivate Teachers

Category	Definition	Examples
Tangible Rewards	Items or events other than positive feedback provided as a consequence for good work performance	Money, flowers, extra day off, designated parking space
Positive interactions	Vocal or written interaction that expressed positive regard, empathy, or good will or reflected a favorable judgement of work behavior	Thanking (teachers) for work, sending a congratulatory note, asking about a (teacher's) family
Participative management	Involving (teachers) in decision making, soliciting (teacher) input, or delegating work responsibility	Listening to (teacher) ideas, making (teachers) feel that their opinions count
Assisting (teachers) with work	A supervisor assisting with part or all of a (teacher's) job	Jumping in to help (teachers), doing the job before being critical of (teachers)
Supervisory structure	Taking action to make job expectations more clear, arranging training, providing resources to do the job, offering ways intended to make the job more attractive or enjoyable	Making family friendly policies, creating a fun atmosphere, reasonable job assignments

# Our Two Case Examples: How to Motivate Sally and Gerald?

Sally the Special Education Teacher



- Sally loves to excel and do well in her classroom
- Any positive performance feedback
- Recognition from administrators and other faculty members
- Supplies!!!!

Gerald the General Education Teacher



- Offering help with class activities
- Self-directed program
- Independence





“Supervision”



# Implications for data integrity and treatment fidelity

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- If part of your job is to specify staff performances that need to occur and to monitor these for the purpose of decision making, it is imperative that you collect measures of data integrity and treatment fidelity (Vollmer, Sloman, & St. Peter Pipkin, 2008)
  - You will need to do IOA checks with the teacher
  - You will need to do fidelity checks on the teacher's performance (and on your own)





## Worst Kept Secret #7:

Teachers are just as susceptible to punishment as children

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- Supervisors themselves can represent a bad thing in (teachers') work environment
- What are things you might do that make the environment more aversive for that teacher?

# Examples of Consequences to Avoid with Teachers

Category	Definition	Examples
Negative interactions	Vocal or written interaction that expressed negative regard, ill-will, lack of empathy, or reflected a poor judgment of work performance	Criticizing work, degrading a (teacher) publicly, talking down to (teachers)
Authoritative management	Not involving (teachers) in decision making, not soliciting (teacher) input	Actions excluding (teachers) from decision making, withholding information
Supervisor inaccessibility	Actions that remove a supervisor from involvement with (teachers) or limit knowledge of a (teacher) job	Sitting in the office, not visiting classrooms, having “just do your job and don’t bother me” attitude
Inattention to structure	Not making job expectations clear, no training, not providing resources, not trying to make the job attractive	Lack of family friendly policies, inadequate training, unreasonable duties
Supervisor inaction	Taking no action to resolve a problem, motivate (teachers), or improve the work environment	Avoiding decision making, never telling (teachers) they have done a good job, doing nothing all day





## Worst Kept Secret #8:

Teachers can feel anxious about their performance

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- Evaluation and performance monitoring can create an aversive context
- This is especially true when the process is not transparent
- To partner effectively, trust is very important



“(Teachers) should know  
their performance is being  
monitored and why the  
monitoring is occurring”

(Reid & Parsons, 2006)





# Record Review

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- Know something about the teachers you are working with prior to implementing anything
  - Ask questions about their students
  - Ask what kind of support they are getting now



# Indirect Assessment

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- Which classrooms are struggling?
- Who has been in to work with them before?
- How long have those collaborations lasted?
- Did they end positively or negatively?





# Direct Assessment

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- Observation is key to assessing performance, and giving feedback
  - Consider asking teachers for preferred times to observe
- Initial responses to monitoring are usually negative; so how do we make it better?
  - Inform teachers that monitoring will occur
- Routinely monitor teacher performance, not just in response to problems
  - Familiarize teachers with monitoring procedures
  - Is everything specific, observable, and measurable?
- Be nice when monitoring (pleasant and unobtrusive)
  - Discontinue monitoring during atypical situations (i.e., fire drills, when teacher is sick, etc.)



## A tip...

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- Put yourself in their shoes.
- Have them monitor YOU!
- Have them collect IOA and fidelity measures on you and have them give YOU feedback





# Training



Worst Kept Secret #9: skill building

Staff training should meet one bottom-line criterion: It should be *effective*. We shouldn't assume a performance problem is a "won't" do unless we know it's not a "can't" do.





# Intervention-Training

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- Involve teachers in deciding what will be recommended
  - Give teachers options to choose from
    - Training maybe more effective if the intervention is something that is acceptable to and chosen by the teachers
- Most staff workshops are highly ineffective, unless they are aimed at improving verbal skills
  - If goal of training is performance, folks actually have to perform
- Effective Training Strategies
  - Model, Lead, Test
  - Behavioral Skills Training
  - Precision Teaching



# Behavioral Skills Training

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- Specify the performance
- Provide a written summary of the steps
- Verbally describe the steps and give rationales
- Physically demonstrate the task
- Observe staff practice the skills
- Provide corrective and supportive feedback
- Continue the last three steps until correct performance is observed





# How will you measure effectiveness?

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- Consider measures of the performance skills addressed in the training
- Also consider child behaviors that should improve as a result of the staff training



# Other things to consider

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- Efficiency of training
  - Teachers are busy people with little down time
  - Your time is limited
- Acceptability of training
  - Ask/give choices
  - We often find folks don't really like the parts where they have to perform and get feedback, especially if it's public
    - More acceptable when done individually





## Two Case Examples for Sally and Gerald



### Sally the Special Education Teacher

- Model, least, test would be effective
- Public positive feedback and interventions
- Behavioral Skills Training

### Gerald the General Education Teacher

- Take a supportive role first!
  - Try out the strategies you are offering to him first before you train him on them
- Give Gerald options of the strategies you will train him on
  - Ensure that all strategies are acceptable for him
- Feedback should be discrete
- Overall, least intrusive training strategies
  - Self-Management



# Monitoring for Maintenance





“Consistently successful (teacher) training programs are effective, efficient, and acceptable”

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Sound familiar?

It should, because its **Code 2.09 Treatment/Intervention Efficacy** in your BACB Professional and Ethical Compliance Code.



Worst Kept Secret #10: Train and hope doesn't work.





## A couple of tips:

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- Plan for generalization and maintenance.
- Plus, it's good for the relationship.



# Once you change behavior, how do you maintain it?

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- Don't rely on your training to fix everything
  - Consistent and on-going monitoring is key
- Listen to teacher requests and complaints regarding implementation of your recommendations
  - Stand up for teachers if they are not getting support
- Establish long-term goals in addition to short-term goals
- What systems-wide changes are needed to maintain behavior?





# Sample Checklist for Observation

Skill Steps	Yes	No	NA
Shows child two food items	X		
Prompts child to choose one by saying “Which one would you like?”	X		
Waits at least 10 seconds for child to respond by touching, pointing, or gesturing toward one of the items (then provides the chosen snack item).		X	
If child does not respond within 10 seconds, gives child a taste of each item and presents it items again for choice.	X		
If child selects an item, gives it to the child	X		
If child does not respond by selecting an item, indicates another choice will be provided later.			X



# Feedback

Supervisor's Job	Desirable Teacher Performance	Undesirable Teacher Performance
Provide a positive consequence	Do	Don't
Provide a negative consequence	Don't	Sometimes

“When negative or critical feedback is necessary to improve (teacher) performance, the feedback should be presented individually and privately.” (Reid & Parsons, 2006)





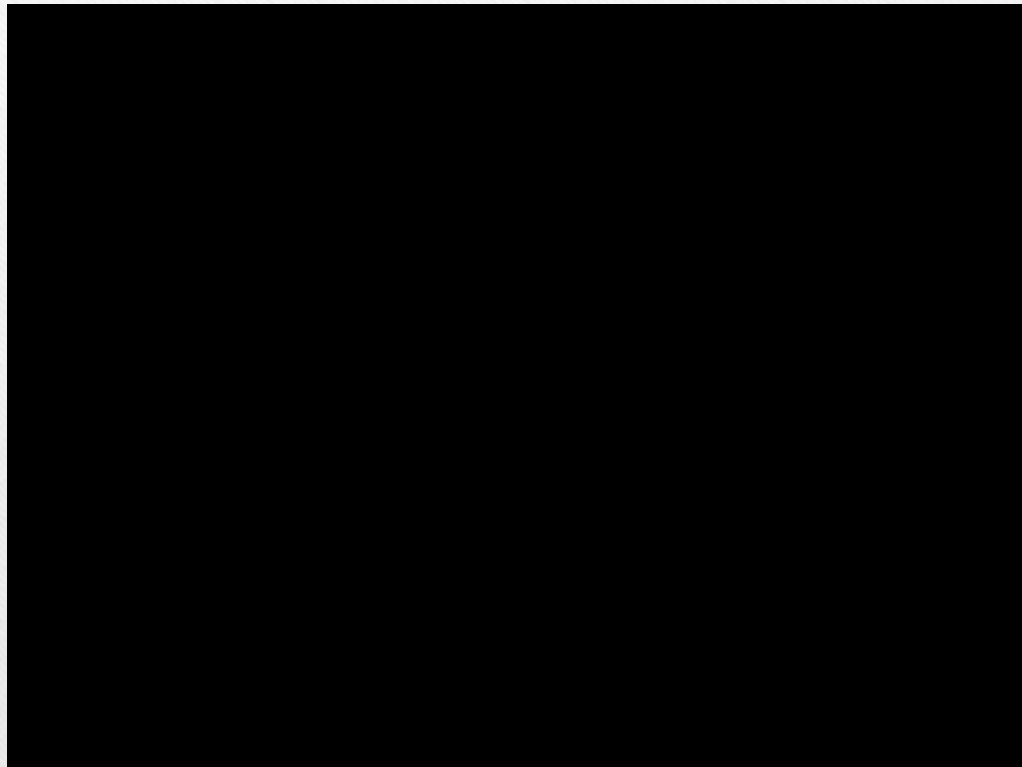
# Feedback Protocol

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- Begin with a positive or empathetic statement
- Provide supportive comments regarding aspects of what the teacher did correctly
- Identify specific skills that were performed incorrectly
- Identify how the skills that were performed incorrectly should have been performed
- Solicit questions or concerns from the staff trainee
- Talk about what will happen next (i.e., More training? Extra practice? Changes that need to be made?)
- End with a positive statement about the teacher's performance.\*

# The Sh\*\* Sandwich

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLq-skUOfly>





# Our Two Case Examples: Effective Performance Monitoring

## Sally the Special Education Teacher

- Public postings of her performance
- Monitor praise rates and opportunities to respond
- Give her goals and objectives



## Gerald the General Education Teacher

- Begin with self-monitoring
- Graphs his own data
- He sets up his own goals and objectives
- Unobtrusive observation
  - Fewer observations by you and more self-monitoring by Gerald





Worst Kept Secret #11: YOU need positive reinforcement and a positive environment, too!





“If (you) are to effectively help (teachers) work hard and enjoy their work, (you) must be motivated to work hard and enjoy what (you) do” (Reid & Parsons, 2006)



# Self-Reinforcement

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- Take active steps to stay motivated
  - Set goals
    - Continuously set goals for what you will accomplish in your collaborative relationship
    - Make short-term goals as well as long-term goals
  - Self-reinforcement
    - Purposely engage in a desired activity after a difficult and time-intensive work activity





Worst Kept Secret #12: There's a lot to disagree on. But how we handle that is going to most significantly affect the outcome of our consultation.

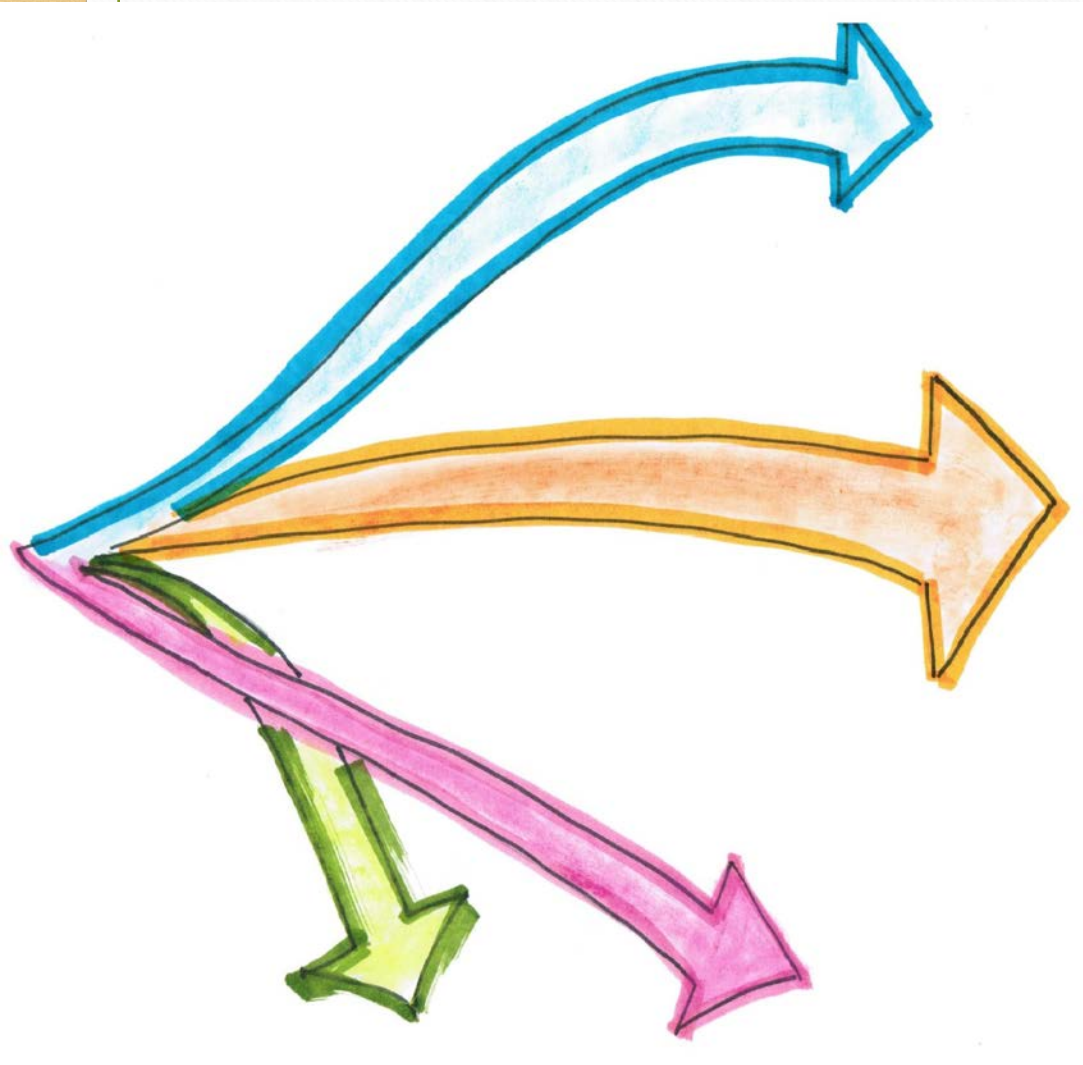


# Things we might not agree on....

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- Whether instruction should be teacher- or child-directed
- Whether food items should be used as reinforcers in the classroom
- The extent to which children should receive praise for correct behaviors
- Whether sensory integration therapy should be implemented
- Whether toilet training falls within a preschool teacher's responsibility to teach
- The percentage of the school day children should be actively engaged in instruction
- And on, and on, and on....





We can focus on our  
points of divergence,  
or....

Better yet, let's focus on our points of convergence.

--An homage to my mentor,  
Dr. David P. Wacker





# What are our points of convergence?

- **We all want to see the children we serve:**
  - Learn new skills
  - Do well in school
  - Do well in life afterwards—have a job, live independently, be productive members of society
  - Access activities and environments that their families and nondisabled peers access
- **Good teaching...**
  - Is hard work!
  - Can be incredibly rewarding
  - Involves keep observing and good record keeping (data collection)
  - Requires close attention to what we are doing





The mind is like a parachute...

It works best when open.





Thank you!

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Questions?



# References

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- Reid, D. H., & Parsons, M. B. (1995). *Motivating human service staff: Supervisory strategies for maximizing work effort and work enjoyment* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Morganton, NC: Habilitative Management Consultants.