

Blending *Building on Patterns Kindergarten* With the General Education Curriculum

When integrating *Building on Patterns Kindergarten (BOP-K)* into the general education language arts class, it is important for the teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI) to consider the type of activities the student would most benefit from, which activities can enhance interactions with peers, and which ones present opportunities for pull-out braille instruction. The student's individual strengths and needs will help to determine the answers. The balance of individual instruction and participation in the general education classroom may also evolve over the course of the year.

A concern is sometimes expressed about the student participating in two programs that follow different Scope and Sequences (S&S). Successful integration relies on frequent, ongoing communication and collaborative planning with the general education teacher. Sufficient time should be set aside to discuss differences in print and braille and the way in which *BOP-K* can support the language arts curriculum within the general education classroom. One area of instruction where this may occur is the initial introduction of letters. *BOP-K* has a specific order of letter introduction, based on the ease of discrimination and the usefulness of high frequency alphabetic wordsigns for reading simple continuous text. It may be beneficial to use an individualized pull-out approach with the student based on the *BOP-K* order of letter introduction. Once all or most of the letters have been learned, the student can join phonics instruction in the general education curriculum where appropriate.

Since general education classroom curricula and teachers' instructional styles vary widely, it is difficult to predict how *BOP* fits into the S&S of a specific classroom. Having familiarity with *BOP-K* and classroom programming allows the TSVI to minimize differences so that the student can receive direct instruction in braille reading and writing as well as access to general education classroom activities.

The following are common classroom activities:

- **Calendar Time/Morning Circle**

It is helpful to incorporate unique calendar elements from the general education classroom into *BOP-K* calendar activities. The student can bring their monthly

calendar to their class (as well as an abacus to count days in school), following along as they gradually increase their independence in the activity.

Some language arts teachers share a written morning message with students during circle time and incorporate short lessons on punctuation, capitalization, and spelling after reading the message. TSVIs can prepare a braille copy of the message ahead of time, allowing the student to follow along with peers in the activity. If the morning message is not available in advance, the TSVI can write the message while the class is preparing for circle. In this situation, the student can observe the functional use of braille. Writing the message quickly may mean the TSVI occasionally makes errors in the text. This is a unique opportunity for the student to observe that everyone makes mistakes, and that there are ways they can be corrected!

- **Reading Groups**

Reading groups are an important aspect of the language arts curriculum and allow the general education teacher to observe a variety of reading skills. Consider working with the general education teacher to choose books that are more appropriate to a braille reader, keeping in mind the complexity of concepts presented and whether the story requires picture description and interpretation. Often, multiple storybooks are available for each reading level; an informed choice of books is essential. Some strategies for integrating a braille reader into reading groups including the following:

- The TSVI and the general education teacher can work together, using assessment data from *BOP-K* and observations to determine the appropriate reading group.
- Communicate with the general education teacher regarding elements such as “picture walks” and how punctuation marks will be handled in braille to allow a more accessible experience for the braille reader.
- Pre-teach contractions, special symbols (e.g., the bold word indicator), punctuation, and key vocabulary and concepts before the reading group. In addition, having children in the reading group act out visuals may reinforce concepts and provide a fun, interactive activity with peers.

- **Read-Alouds**

The read-aloud stories in *BOP-K* may be used as a stepping stone in the development of the student's listening comprehension skills. Since *BOP-K* read-alouds are theme-based for increased understanding, are reread multiple times, and are engaged with in a one-to-one setting, they prepare the student for read-alouds in group settings. Read-alouds within the general education classroom may be more complex and rely at least in part on pictures. Before the student joins a class read-aloud, it may be helpful to also pre-teach the key vocabulary or concepts from the books.

Another option is to collaborate with the general education teacher to incorporate *BOP* read-aloud books. For example, the class teacher could choose *Last Stop on Market Street* as a class read-aloud, and the student can hold the braille copy during the reading if appropriate.

- **Independent Reading and Buddy Reading**

Kindergarten braille students may experience difficulty engaging in independent reading time since their general education peers frequently focus on the images in picture books. Braille readers may have limited numbers of tactile books, impacting their interest over the length of the activity. *BOP-K* student storybooks are high-interest alternatives with both text and tactile graphics. Keeping a book box with student storybooks (originals or copies) in the general education room provides an opportunity for the student to reread familiar text and offers a chance to read to peers during buddy reading.

- **My Reader**

Poems from the general education class should be brailled and can be added to the student's My Reader binder to increase opportunities for the student to practice reading them with the TSVI, with the class, and/or independently. Rereading of familiar text supports the development of reading fluency.

- **Literacy Centers and Games**

Certain activities and games in the literacy centers can be adapted for participation by braille readers. Once the activity is modified, it may be helpful to teach the game (and skills such as rolling and reading dice) in a pull-out setting

or with one peer before having the student participate with a small group in the classroom.

Games presented in *BOP-K*, such as Go Fish and Bingo, may be adapted with print to allow participation by braille and print readers at a literacy center. These games can also be used as indoor recess activities.

- **High Frequency Words**

Kindergartners learn high frequency words as part of the language arts curriculum; the TSVI can add the classroom high frequency words to the student's word ring or create a separate word ring for classroom words. It may be helpful to include full spelling along with contracted braille for each word.

- **Writing**

Several of the writing projects in *BOP* may tie well into classroom projects, such as creating the *Nice to Meet You* book or a nonfiction opinion piece. When the class is creating classroom books, an individual *BOP* lesson can be modified so the student can participate in this shared activity. Depending on the student's level of writing, the TSVI can determine which approach is the most appropriate: modeled/interactive, guided, or independent.

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