Partial Supplement to VISTA

(designed to be used in conjunction with)

Vermont Interdependent Services Team Approach: A Guide to Coordinating Educational Support Services

by Michael F. Giangreco © 1996 and published by Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co, of Baltimore, MD (800) 638-3775

(Supplement Date, January 26, 1996)

Michael F. Giangreco, Ph.D.
University of Vermont
5 Burlington Square, Ste 450
Burlington, Vermont 05401-4439
(802) 656-1144
mgiangre@zoo.uvm.edu (email)

** DRAFT **
Thank you for not copying, citing, or distributing without written permission

[1] This supplemental information is an update based on field-testing and other research of the <u>Vermont Interdependent Services Team Approach: A Guide to Coordinating Educational Support Services</u> by Michael F. Giangreco © 1996 and published by Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co, of Baltimore, MD

VISTA includes 5 "To Do" Lists
(Supplemental to pages 80-96 of the published version)

#1: General Preparation

#2: Getting Ready for the VISTA Meeting

#3: Using the VISTA Worksheet at the VISTA Meeting

#4: Using the VISTA Team Summary at the VISTA Meeting

#5: What's Next After the VISTA Meeting

These "To Do" Lists offer a set of steps to operationalize the guiding principles of VISTA. Although they are presented in a sequential order, it is important to recognize that the steps are interrelated, overlap to varying extents, and may require revisiting previously completed steps as changes occur for the student, the family, the professional staff, or the school. Educating students is a dynamic process, therefore VISTA is most effective when used flexibly by competent and caring team members. So please view these steps as general guidelines rather than a lock-step prescription. To facilitate your use of these "To Do" Lists, each numbered step is followed by one or more "Helpful Hints."

There is an updated "VISTA Worksheet" to replace the one found in Appendix C (Blank Forms) of the published version on page 122.

To Do List #1:
General Preparation

1. Form a team including people who will be affected by team decisions and who are necessary to educate the student.

    •   Be sure to include important stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, support personnel) and at the same time limit membership to those who are essential.

2. Have team members become knowledgeable about the capabilities of various disciplines as well as the availability of local, regional, and statewide services which they may access

    •   Have team members review Description of Support Services (see Appendix A) and obtain additional information about various disciplines as needed.

    • Develop a listing of local, regional, and statewide support services available to the team that are relevant to students needs (see Appendix B).

3. Have team members share information with each other about the skills, abilities, and interests they each bring to the team.

    •   This can be done in a written format to share among members (see Appendix C). Face-to-face interactions to share information are strongly encouraged.

4. Designate each team member as a member of the core or extended team or as a situational resource to the team (Team Membership Worksheet - Appendix C).

    •   Core team members: a) determine educational program components; b) participate in all planning, implementation and evaluation of the educational program; and c) are on site enough to be part of ongoing decision-making.
    •   Extended team members: a) provide necessary, specialized supports, beyond those available from core team members; b) participate in planning, implementing, and evaluating team-selected aspects of the educational program; and c) are available less frequently than core members.

    •   Situational Resources: are individuals who have highly specialized support that is necessary to pursue the student's educational program and are available to the team infrequently
    .

5. Clarify which team members are "classroom staff."

- Make sure everyone shares the same understanding regarding who is in the classroom on a daily basis and which professional staff are responsible for the child's education on an ongoing basis.

- Your designation of "classroom staff" vary depending on when during the year VISTA is used. When preparing for a transitions members include people who currently work with the student as well as those in the receiving setting.

6. Make sure each team member knows the student.

- Use observation, direct interaction, assessment, social activities, etc.

7. Identify a Case Coordinator and clarify his/her role.

- Typically the Case Coordinator is a member of the core team.

8. Make sure each team member understands VISTA and is making an informed decision to participate in the process based on it's underlying principles.

- Have team members read the VISTA manual and then help each other learn about VISTA using the Self Study Guidelines (see Appendix D).

9. Discuss team members' shared framework and attitudes about education of students with disabilities

- Clarify team members' opinions about critical issues so that they are understood and the team can work toward developing a shared framework (see Appendix E).

To Do List #2:
Getting Ready for the VISTA Meeting

10. Core team members determine the student's educational program components including:

- small set of <u>priority learning outcomes</u> that are individualized, family-selected and discipline-free;

- <u>additional learning outcomes</u> by category that extend beyond the top priorities; when determining additional learning outcomes remember to consider what aspects of the general education program are appropriate learning outcomes;

- <u>general supports</u> to be done to or for the student to allow access to, or participation in school.

- Document the educational program using a Program-at-a-Glance (PAAG) and transfer to the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

- Make sure the reference numbers on the PAAG correspond with those on the VISTA Worksheet and VISTA Summary.

11. Share educational program components (determined by the core team) with extended team members.

- Educational program components are shared with extended team members so they are well-informed about the student's program and may have the opportunity to suggest possible adjustments to the educational program for consideration by the core team.

12. Determine the student's educational placement.

- Determine the educational placement that best fits the student and his/her educational program with maximum opportunity to be educated with students who do not have disabilities.

- The local school the student would attend if not disabled and the chronologically age-appropriate general class should be the first option considered, with supports as needed (these supports are what is being determined using VISTA).

13. Determine if inclusion of a student in the classroom will necessitate a change in the staff :student ratio.

- Don't confuse the need for staff :student ratio changes (e.g., lower class size or adding an assistant) with the need for specialized support services.

- Lowering the staff :student ratio will extend the capability of the classroom staff to carry out the plans of the teacher, but typically will not add specialized supports to the class.

14. Arrange a time and place for the VISTA meeting that is acceptable to the family.

   • Consider the family's comfort meeting at school, in their home, or elsewhere.

15. Determine which team members will be present at the VISTA meeting by selecting between Core and Full Team Options for VISTA Meeting.

   • The VISTA meeting includes the core team (e.g., parent, teacher special educator) to make sure the consumers of support services have a voice. Decide who else needs to be present.

16. Distribute a copy of the prepared VISTA Worksheet along with the Program-at-a-Glance to team members.

   • Prepare the VISTA Worksheet by listing General Support categories, Priority Learning Outcomes, and Additional Learning Outcome categories in the left column -- refer to the Program-at-a-Glance for details.

   • Distribute it to all team members so those expected to be in attendance can consider support needs in advance of the meeting and those not expected to be in attendance can share their input for consideration by the core team.

   • Include special area teachers such as Art, Music, Library, and Physical Education.

17. Establish Team Meeting Roles.

   • Select a facilitator, timekeeper, recorder and other roles as needed, to be used during the VISTA Meeting. Have team members prepare for their respective roles.

To Do List #3:
Using the VISTA Worksheet at the VISTA Meeting

Using the questions on "To Do" List #3 (18-22) and the VISTA Worksheet, cycle through for each General Support category, Priority Learning Outcomes, & Additional Learning Outcomes category asking:

18. **Can the classroom staff can address the student's educational program components without additional specialized support?**

   - Within the VISTA framework the "default" is that the classroom teacher will plan, implement, and evaluate the student's educational program with the assistance of classroom staff. Therefore, Special Education may be listed as a support service.

   - Ask for "Yes" or "No" from each core member starting with the teacher, then proceeding to other core members; save discussions for the next questions.

   - Either check "yes" (column 1) and proceed to next entry, or check "no" if anyone says "no" and proceed to 19-22; change responses as discussion warrants.

19. **What kind of supports are needed for the student to access to and/or participate in the identified educational program?**

   - Focus the discussion on <u>what</u> is needed, <u>not who</u> is needed.

   - Discuss kinds of supports needed to provide a "basic floor of opportunity.", such as: a) transfer of information or skills to others, b) selecting equipment, c) developing adaptations, d) planning & demonstrating strategies, g) resource to family, h) applying discipline-specific methods.

   - Record in column 2 and use meeting minutes to elaborate.

   - Do not list services here such as OT, PT, Speech Pathology in this column.

20. **Who has the capability to provide the supports?**

   - Start by first considering core team members and natural supports (e.g. peers, other school personnel, parents). Does it make sense for them to learn new skills rather than adding specialized support personnel? Next, consider the extended team or situational resources.

   - Select people based on ability to provide the support, not by title.

   - Record supports in column 3; abbreviate disciplines or names and use key.

21. Is the proposed support educationally relevant and necessary?

- Verify educational relevance by referencing the proposed support service to educational program component.

- Will the absence of the proposed support interfere with the student's access to, or participation in, his or her individualized educational program?

- Do the supports present any undesirable or unnecessary gaps, overlaps, or contradictions?

- Do both the sender and receiver of the proposed service agree it is needed?

- If the proposed service is provided in one context, can it be adequately generalized to other settings without the need for direct involvement by a specialist?

- Can the service be appropriately provided during nonschool hours?

22. Does the core team agree the support services are required, yet Only-as-Special-as-Necessary?

- Is this the least restrictive, least intrusive way to offer supports?

- Does the support avoid unnecessary overservice?

- Everyone doesn't need to be involved in everything! Does a primary specialist make sense?

- Be careful to avoid false consensus and deferring to each other.

To Do List #4:
Using the VISTA Team Summary at the VISTA Meeting

Using the VISTA Team Summary, for each support service (e.g., speech-language, special education, physical therapy, counseling):

23. List the service(s) agreed to on the VISTA Worksheet in the spaces provided on the VISTA Team Summary.

   • Use abbreviations of disciplines (a key can help) since individuals may change.

24. Indicate which components of the educational program will be supported by the respective disciplines (use #'s from VISTA Worksheet).

   • Avoid confusion by ensuring that the numbers on the VISTA Worksheet, Program-at-a-Glance, and VISTA Team Summary coincide.

25. Reach consensus regarding which mode of service provision (e.g., consult) matches the functions being served by the support service.

   • This can be indirect/consult, direct, or a combination.

   • Really make a group decision that makes sense; guard against deferring and false consensus.

26. Reach consensus regarding how frequently the service needs to be provided.

   • Discuss and negotiate what is included in the time recommendation (e.g., planning, making adaptations, team meetings).

   • Remember this will be a collective "best guess" that will need to be implemented, evaluated, and adjusted as needed.

   • Really make a group decision that makes sense; guard against deferring and false consensus.

27. Reach consensus on the least restrictive location for service provision.

   • Balance the student's right to access environments with others who do not have disabilities with his/her right to privacy.

- As a general rule of thumb, provide the services in the location they would be provided if the student did not have a disability.

- If the student is removed from typical environments to receive educational or support services, develop a plan to reintegrate the student as soon as possible.

28. Reach consensus regarding a date when the type, mode, and frequency of each support service should be re-evaluated.

- Attempt to coordinate these dates with existing schoolwide progress reporting dates.

- In cases where the level of consensus is not strong, consider a shorter re-evaluation date.

29. Have team members in attendance at the VISTA meeting sign the VISTA Team Summary to establish accountability and document consensus.

- Signing the VISTA Team Summary is in no way contractual. It is intended to raise each person's level of accountability for the group decisions.

- Hopefully, VISTA will assist the team in reaching consensus. If after concerted effort consensus is not reached, it would be the responsibility of the LEA (Local Education Agency) to put forth a recommendation. If that recommendation is unacceptable to the family, they may pursue mediation (if available) and use their rights to due process.

To Do List #5:
What's Next After the VISTA Meeting

30. Make arrangements to share and file the results of the VISTA Meeting.

   - Provide a full copy of the VISTA documents to the family.

   - Share the VISTA Team Summary and Meeting Minutes with each team member, including those who were not in attendance at the VISTA meeting.

   - Give those not in attendance at the VISTA Meeting an opportunity to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the decisions of those in attendance.

   - If team members disagree, have a team meeting or phone discussion with the appropriate people to reach agreement and adjust the plans accordingly. Once agreement has been reached, continue.

   - Attach or transfer the decisions made using VISTA to the appropriate places on the student's IEP, ITP, transition plan or other appropriate document.

   - Place a copy of all the VISTA and accompanying documents in the student's permanent file and distribute to all appropriate individuals.

31. Use the VISTA Worksheet and Team Meeting Minutes to determine Situational Teams made up of subgroups of team members who will need to work together to address common goals.

   - Since not everyone needs to work on everything, the VISTA Team Summary provides a listing of which support service staff need to assist the classroom staff in planning, implementing, and evaluating the educational program.

32. Have the Situational Teams implement their respective parts of the educational program.

   - Situational teams are designed to be used flexibly and to encourage quick action to implement educational plans.

33. Evaluate the impact of the support service(s) by considering how it has affected access to educational

opportunities, acquisition of identified learning outcomes, and valued life outcomes.

- These evaluation concerns should be addressed on an ongoing basis by the professional staff with input from other team members and should be addressed formally and pre-determined progress reporting times.

34. Use evaluative information to adjust support services and the educational program to meet student needs.

- Exploration of these evaluation issues highlights the dynamic nature of educational and support service provision. Be prepared to make adjustments based on what the team learns along their journey.