Late Summer/Early Fall 2003

1. Form a Project EVOLVE Planning Team (Refer to Guidelines..., p. 7). The team’s role will be to utilize the model planning process (Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals) to self-assess the school’s current utilization of paraprofessionals and develop a plan to improve service delivery to students with disabilities in general education classes.

   Tip: Try to keep the size as close to the recommendation of 8 as possible.

   Tip: A "consumer" can be a student or an adult with a disability.

   Tip: A "critical friend" should NOT be employed by the school.

   Tip: Involvement by the school principal is crucial.

2. Maintain a Master Copy of your Guidelines... manual. You will be asked to hand in completed pages -- this is a main data source for our project.

3. Distribute copies of the Guidelines... manuals to each team member and have each person familiarize themselves with the contents prior to your first meeting.

4. Establish a meeting schedule. You will need to schedule four meetings over a period of one to two months. (Refer to Guidelines..., p. 6). Please email us with your meeting dates.
Meeting #1 (approximately 2 hrs.)
Meeting #2 (approximately 2 hrs.)
Meeting #3 (approximately 2 hrs.)
Meeting #4 (approximately 3 hrs.)

Tip: Given the challenges of scheduling meetings. We suggest you establish a meeting schedule in advance. It would be preferable to complete your first four meetings by the end of October. Consider the weeks in November prior to the Thanksgiving school break as a cushion time in case you have to reschedule a meeting or need additional time.

* As stated in the initial application materials you reviewed during the application process, it is important to note that this is not a training or technical assistance project and is not a project about improving training or supports for paraprofessionals. This project views overreliance or inappropriate utilization of paraprofessionals as symptomatic of other challenges facing schools. This project is about exploring and improving schoolwide practices. We will be studying the school's use of the tool without significant technical support from the project. Our premise is that in order for our planning process to be replicable, it must be clear enough and easy enough for schools to guide their own work without much help from us (other than the research-based tools and processes). We have a very modest budget and have directed a good chunk of it toward providing some funds to schools. Unfortunately, we do not have travel money to visit your sites. That is why we have some sites in Vermont (that we can visit) and those in other states to explore the generalizability of our planning process.

5. Keep the principal at your proposed replication site informed about your activities. Remember, your replication site should be at a different age level than your original site. For example, if your initial site is an Elementary School, then the replication site should be a Middle or High School.

Early-Mid Fall 2003

6. Although not required, the Vermont schools found it helpful to survey their faculty and parents. There are different surveys for teachers, special educators, paraprofessionals (special education only), administrators, and parents of children with disabilities who receive paraprofessional supports, There are not surveys for general education paraprofessionals, professional support staff (e.g. guidance counselors, nurses, librarians, related services providers). If you decide to pursue this route, there are questionnaires available online at: http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/evolve/surveys.html

Tip: If you decide to use these surveys you will need to adjust your planning time accordingly. You will need to have the information
collected and tallied prior to your second meeting (Self-Assessment, Step 5). We would appreciate knowing if you decide to do this. In the past we have surveyed only parents whose children were receiving paraprofessional supports (a maximum of 5 parents per special educator). We have also found that the most efficient way to collect these data (with a high response rate) is to distribute, complete, and collect the surveys at a faculty meeting. To get the most valid information, we remind people at the faculty meeting that this is an individual task; we ask them to refrain from discussing the questions or potential responses with their colleagues at the meeting. Also there are always questions of interpretation -- this is unavoidable with a survey. So we ask people to answer based on their own interpretation and leave anything blank they don’t feel they can legitimately answer. Please ask people to circle ONLY ONE RESPONSE per question. After the faculty meeting you can distribute questionnaires to those not in attendance and a subset of parents.

7. Have your four Project EVOLVE planning meetings. Once you have completed your four meetings (and have your booklet filled out through page 30) we will ask you to **send us a copy of those pages (pp. 6-30)**.

*Tip:* Always keep your original.

*Tip:* We encourage your to send us pages as they are completed. For example, after your first meeting, send us your "Screening" work (pp. 8-10). During the first year of the project (02-03) it was our practice to communicate with the team's designated liaison on a regular basis. You are always free to contact us with questions or feedback,

8. Once we receive your teams work (**Guidelines...**, pp. 6-30), we will be sending you a brief, two-page survey to be completed, individually, by each of the members of your planning team.

**Late Fall 2003 - Winter/Spring 2004**

9. Prepare for and/or implement your action plans (pp. 28-30). Depending on what your team decided to do, some of you may be spending part (or much) of the school year in development activities designed to be implemented in 04-05. Others of you may have selected actions that you can implement during 03-04. Of course, you may have some combination of these activities.

10. By the end of May we would ask that you submit "Implementation Notes" to document what your team has been doing to implement your action plans.
11. Will be sending you a school demographic survey for your replication site to be completed and returned -- it includes basically the same information you submitted in your application -- except that it is based on the replication school.

12. We would like to be in touch with the replication site principal before the end of the school year so that they can establish their school’s Project EVOLVE planning team before the 03-04 school year comes to a close.

2004-05 & 2005-06 School Years

Note: In the 04-05 school year, the initial school will submit an IMPACT REPORT (See page 34 of Guidelines... for specific instructions). We will also be in touch to collect other information (e.g., possibly arrange phone interviews with planning team members). Our intention is to keep the data-reporting burden on you as small as possible while still collecting sufficient information to be useful to the field.

Establish replication site