

An Overview of a 4 Step Process for Accessing the General Curriculum

**PA Low Incidence
Conference 2008**

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Objectives

- Participants will identify current trends in curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- Participants will apply a method for adapting instruction focused toward access to and progress in the general curriculum.

Why are we talking about accessing the general curriculum?

- Assessment is the catalyst.
 - All students must be counted.
 - All assessments must be aligned with/linked to the general education standards (grade level).
 - Alternate assessments must promote access to the general curriculum.

It's a difficult switch!

- History and tradition
 - Special education curricula
 - Special education training
- Experience
 - What we've taught is what we've got
- Current research (or lack of!)

STANDARDS



ASSESSMENT



CURRICULUM



LESSON PLANS

ACTIVITY(IES)



**INSTRUCTIONAL
STRATEGIES**

SKILLS

Curriculum Myths

1. You either teach an academic curriculum or a functional curriculum.
2. You don't have to teach the entire general curriculum.
3. Academic skills aren't functional for some students.
4. Teaching the general curriculum violates the IEP.
5. If they could work on the general education curriculum, they wouldn't be in special education.
6. Physical disabilities represent cognitive abilities (e.g., "She can't even, so how can she learn biology?")

Mythological Walk

1. Divide into 6 groups.
2. 1 person from each group pick up pens
3. Move to designated myth
4. Review myth adding thoughts or comments
5. Listen for signal to move in a clockwise direction to the next myth
6. Review the myth and comments, adding further comments
7. Listen for signal to move to the next myth
8. End at the myth where you started to see the comments

1. You either teach an academic curriculum or a functional curriculum.

- Most functional skills can be taught within the context of general education activities.
 - Social skills
 - Motor skills
 - Behavioral skills
 - Communication skills
- We have to be honest about functional skills. Some of them just aren't that functional (e.g., hospital, cooking).

2. You don't have to teach the entire general curriculum.

- Both IDEA (97 and 04) and NCLB specifically state that all students must be included in/involved in and progress in the general curriculum.
- Can we really be sure that we can decide what individual students can and should learn? (What about sparking interests, sharing a culture, “Trivial Pursuits” ?)

3. Academic skills aren't functional for some students.

- Literacy and numeracy are the 2 most functional skills in our society.
- Standards are functional if we look at the concepts.
- If we can teach students how to learn, they can learn anything.
- What is it that enhances our quality of life?

4. Teaching the general curriculum violates the IEP.

- IDEA states that the IEP must include goals that:
 - “(aa) meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and
 - (bb) meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability;...”
 - Sec. 614. (d) (1) (A) (i) (I)

5. If they could work on the general education curriculum, they wouldn't be in special education.

- Special education is designed to “...enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum...”
 - IDEA Sec. 614. (d) (1) (A) (i) (I) (aa)
- The argument has changed from “Can they?” to “Should they?”

6. Physical disabilities represent cognitive abilities

(e.g., “She can’t even, so how can she learn biology?”)

- A certain set of skills are not required to benefit from augmentative communication.
- Students should not have to wait until they are able to make a bed before they are taught to read or identify initial letter sounds before they are taught literature.
- Students should be presumed competent and not denied instruction offered to students of the same age (grade level content standards and curriculum).

Underlying Realities

- Teacher preparation
- Low expectations
- Lack of background knowledge and access
- Placement

Four Steps to Access

1. Identify or link to the appropriate standard(s)
2. Define the outcome(s) of instruction
3. Identify the instructional activities
4. Target specific objectives from the IEP

[Clayton, J., Burdge, M., Denham, A., Kleinert, H., & Kearns, J. (2006). A four-step process for accessing the general curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38(5), 20-27]

Stepwise Process to Accessing Grade Level Content Standards and Curriculum

1. IDENTIFY THE STANDARD(S) THE INSTRUCTIONAL UNIT WILL ADDRESS.

What is the state standard?	What is the grade level standard?	What is the standard all about?

2. DEFINE THE OUTCOME(S) OF INSTRUCTION FROM THE INSTRUCTIONAL UNIT ON

What are the desired outcomes for all students in general education? What will classroom based assessment look like?	Which outcomes will be prioritized for direct instruction and monitoring for the target student with significant cognitive disabilities? What will formative assessment look like?	What supports (already identified or additional) would be necessary for the target student to access the instruction?

3. IDENTIFY THE INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES TO BE USED IN THE UNIT.

What are the instructional activities planned for all students?	How can the student actively participate in the instructional activities?	What supports (already identified or additional) would help the student access the instruction?

4. TARGET SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FROM THE IEP TO ADDRESS DURING THE UNIT.

Which of the instructional activities provide opportunity to work on objectives?	What IEP objectives re: the general curriculum can be addressed within the instructional activities?	What other IEP objectives can be addressed within the instructional activities?