



NCLB: What's Changing in Education for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities?



Presenters and Topics

- Curricular Changes- Diane Browder
- Summary of Legislation- Irene Meier
- Defining the Issues-Elizabeth Towles-Reeves
- Resources to Help- Jacqui Kearns
- IEPs and Personnel Prep-Diane Browder

Something is happening to curriculum
for students with significant disabilities



Changing Curricular Context for Students with Significant Disabilities

■ Early 1970s

- Adapting infant/ early childhood curriculum for students with significant disabilities of all ages

■ 1980s

- Rejected “developmental model”
- Functional, life skills curriculum emerged

■ 1990s

- Also: social inclusion focus
- Also: self determination focus

■ 2000

- General curriculum access (academic content)
- Plus earlier priorities (functional, social, self determination)



IDEA 1997

- All students have access to general curriculum content
- All students assessed on state standards
 - Creation of alternate assessment
- *All?*
- *Content?*
- *What is an alternate assessment?*



No Child Left Behind

- Schools accountable for ALL students
- AYP in language arts/reading, math, and science
- *Did you say ALL?*
- *Schools are accountable?*



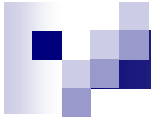
NCLB Regulations/ Guidance

- AYP: can use alternate achievement standards for up to 1% of Ss with SCD
- These standards must be based on academic content linked to grade level
- *Really reading?*
Really math?
Science??



What promoted general curriculum access.....

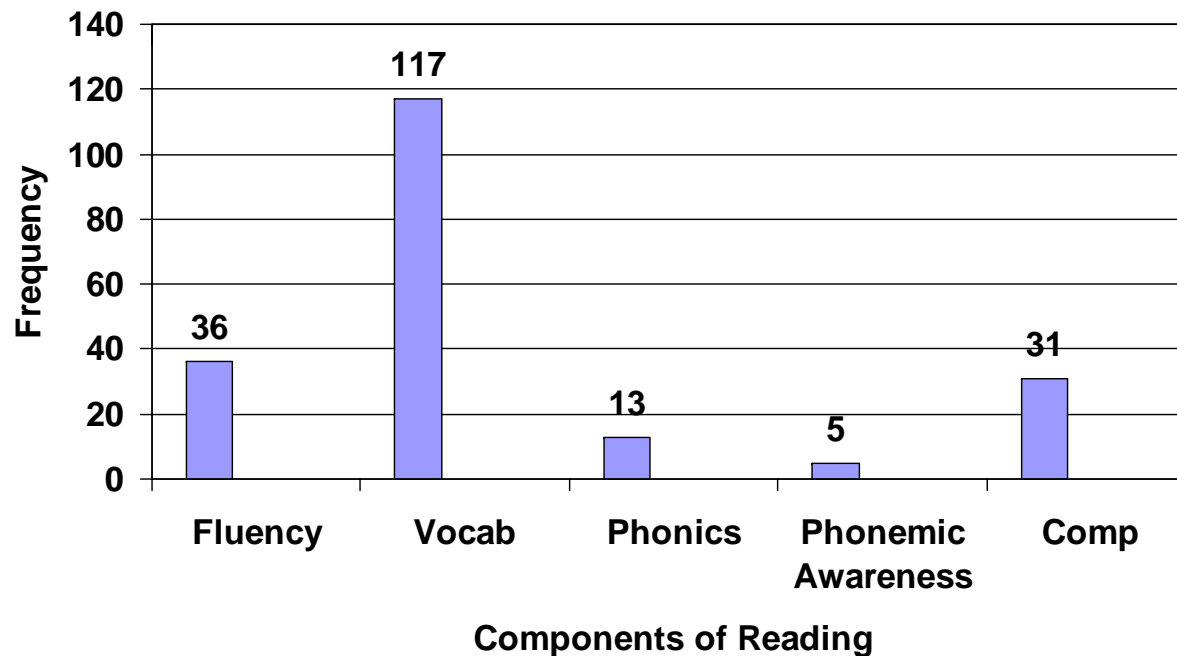
- A national focus on reading, math, and science...
- Includes all students (yes, including Ss with significant cognitive disabilities)...
- Schools report as part of AYP
 - (including Ss with significant cognitive disabilities)



- What does research indicate about whether students with moderate and severe disabilities can learn academics?

Reading: Mostly sight words (without comprehension)

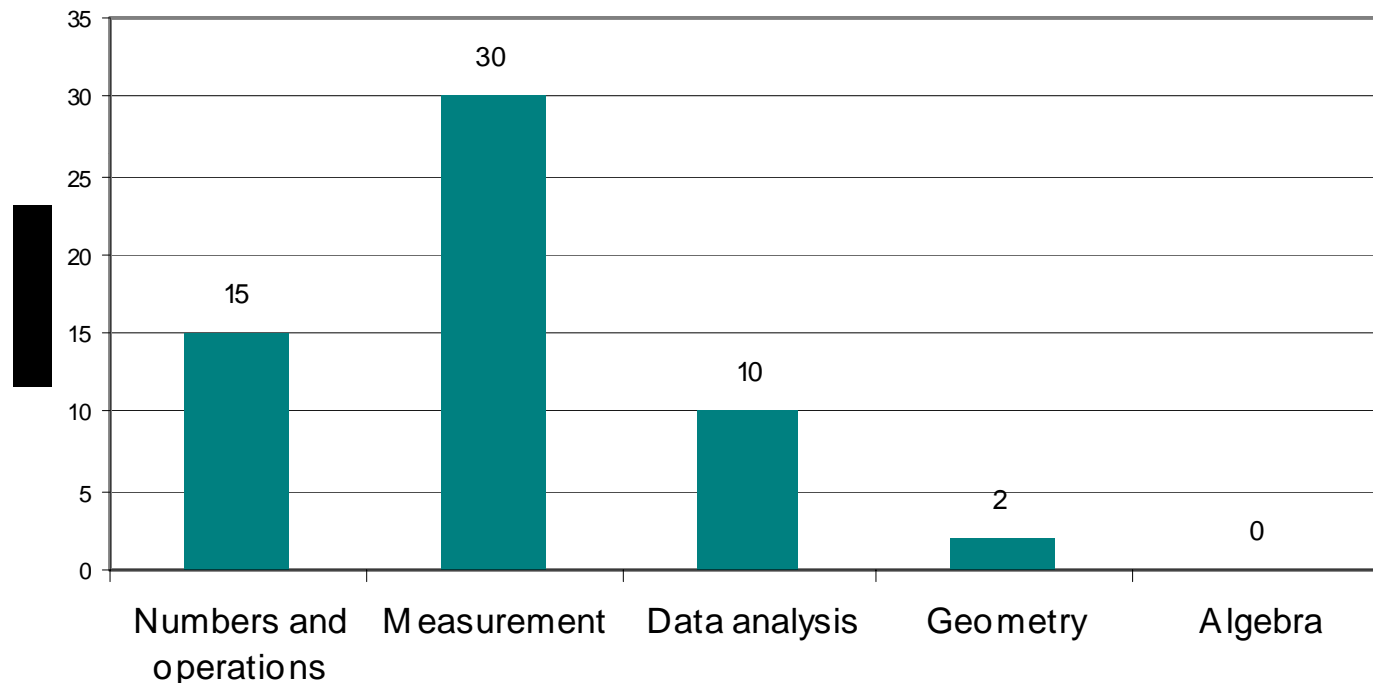
Literature Review Categories for Reading
128 experiments (119 articles)



- Browder, D. Wakeman, S., Spooner, F., Ahlgrim-Delzell, L., & Algozzine, R.F. (2006). A comprehensive review of reading for students with significant cognitive disabilities. *Exceptional Children*. 72, 392-410.

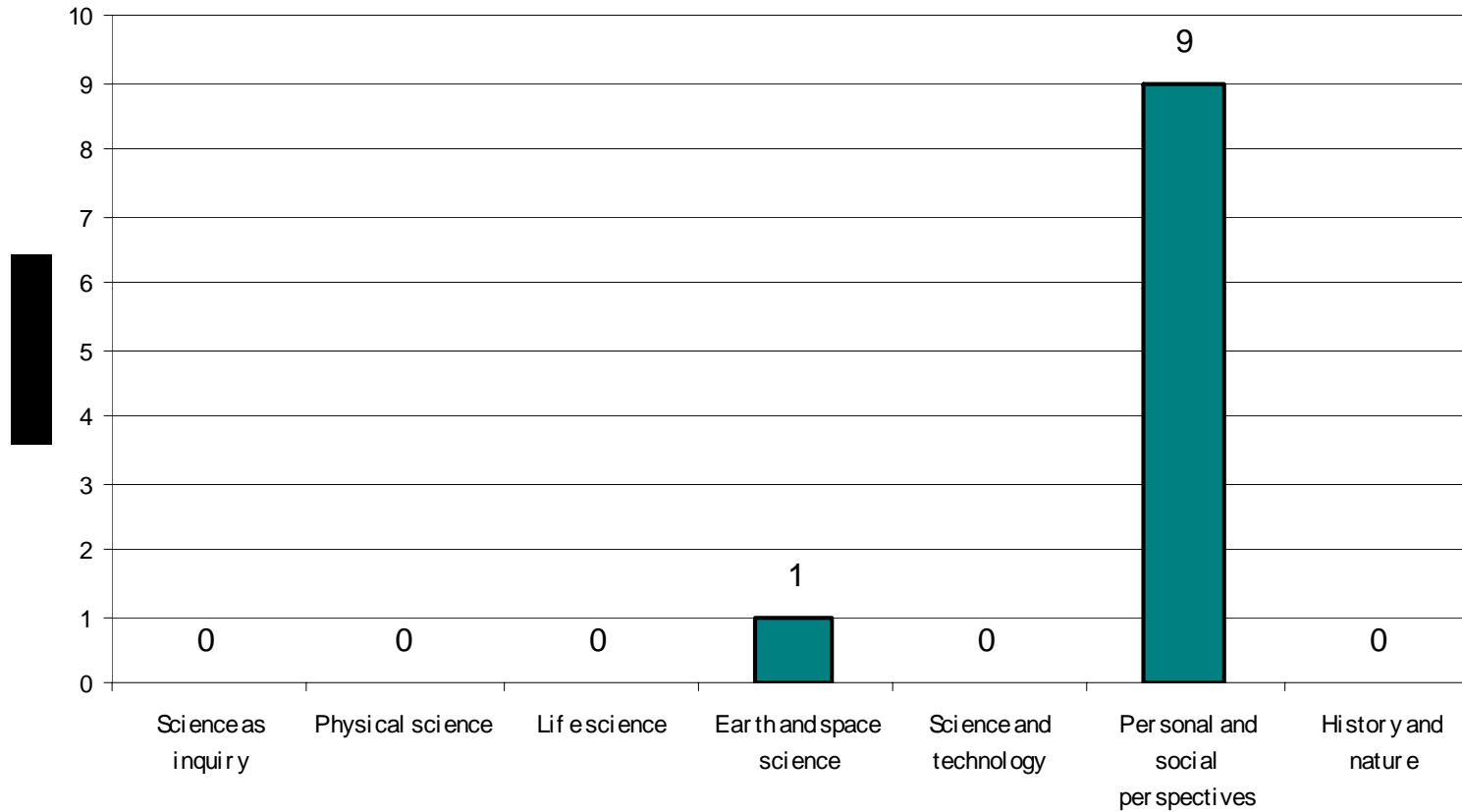
Math: Mostly money

Literature Review Categories for Math 55 experiments (53 articles)



- Browder, D., Spooner, F., Ahlgrim-Delzell, L., Harris, A., & Wakeman, S. (in press). A meta-analysis on teaching mathematics to students with significant cognitive disabilities. *Exceptional Children*.

Science: Almost nothing!



- Courtade-Little, G., Spooner, F., & Browder, D. (In press). A literature review of science for students with significant disabilities. *Research and Practice in Severe Disabilities*.



Evidence?

■ Known

- This population can learn academic skills
- Systematic prompting and fading is effective to teach some academic skills
- Research exists with severe as well as moderate disabilities
- Sight words and money!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

■ Learning as we go

- How to extend to other areas of academic content
- How to adapt for students with most significant disabilities



Have we lost sight of the big picture?

- Functional life skills
- Preparation for adult life in the community



Academics vs. Life Skills

- Both can be taught; both are important
- Academics can be taught in ways that are meaningful
- We do not know what students can learn until we try teaching the content
- Life skills are not a prerequisite to learning academics
- Students who are not disabled do not have to master all life skills to be eligible to learn to read; double standard
- Balance is needed-in planning IEPs and developing daily schedule



**What do the Legislative
Changes Mean for Students
with Significant Cognitive
Disabilities?**

Irene Meier

**Rowan-Salisbury School
System**

Salisbury, North Carolina



Impact of IDEA (2004)

Access and Progress in the General Curriculum

“ To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children” (34 C.F.R. § 300.39(b)(3)(ii))



Changes that May Increase Flexibility

- **Changes may allow for more flexible curricular planning for students with significant disabilities.**
- **IEP's may be amended by written agreement of parent and LEA after the annual IEP team meeting for a school year. (34 C.F.R. § 300.324(b)(4)(i)).**



Impact of NCLB (2002)

- **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)**
- **Highly Qualified Teacher Standards**
- **Reauthorization Recommendations**



Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)


- **Alternate Achievement Standards**
 - **Aligned to State Academic Content Standards**
 - **Promote Access to the General Curriculum**
 - **Reflect Highest Achievement Standards Possible**
 - **Differ in Grade Level Achievement Standards by a Narrower Range of Content and Different Set of Expectations**

(34 C.F.R. § 200.1(d))



Highly Qualified Standards

- How do the regulations address “Highly Qualified?”
- What is HOUSSE (High, Objective, Uniform, State Standard for Evaluation)?
- Who needs to be Highly Qualified?
- How do you become Highly Qualified?



Impact of “HQ” Mandate on Students with Significant Disabilities

- **98% of school districts in US have a shortage of special education teachers (COPSSE Policy Brief, 2004)**
- **May further exacerbate teacher shortage (Allbritten et al., 2004; Billingsley & McLeskey, 2004; Wakeman et al., 2007)**
- **Are HQ teachers sufficiently trained?**



NCLB Recommendations for Reauthorization

- **Who is making recommendations?**
 - **National Governor's Association**
 - **Council of Chief State School Officers**
 - **National Association of State Boards of Education**



What are the Recommendations?

- **Use of a “Growth Model”**
 - **Allow states to differentiate consequences and penalties for not making AYP**
 - **Allow states to offer modified assessments for students with disabilities**
 - **Offer grants to states to analyze state content standards**
- (Joint Statement on Reauthorization of**



NCLB Reauthorization Issues

- **Advantages of decreasing the N-size for each subgroup**
- **Standardizing the N-size nationwide for each subgroup**
- **Developing a growth model**
- **Excluding students with disabilities from the growth model**



Stay Tuned.....

- Will the subgroup N-size be lowered and standardized throughout the U.S.?
- Will there be a growth model for students with disabilities?
- Will students with disabilities be permitted to “opt-out” of testing?
- Will the current personnel shortage be exacerbated by NCLB mandates?
- What will the changes in NCLB reauthorization mean for students with

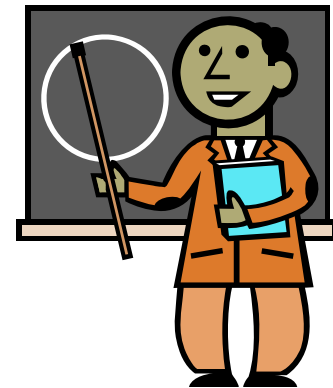


Research and Practice

Jacqui Kearns, EdD
National Alternate
Assessment Center

Changes in Instruction

- What changes have I seen in my own instruction (and within my state) for students with significant cognitive disabilities since NCLB was passed?





What does the research tell us?

- There is limited research related to alternate assessment and instruction of students with significant cognitive disabilities, but what little research that has been conducted thus far is helping us make preliminary data-based decisions for improving instruction for these students.



What does the research tell us?

- Towles-Reeves and Kleinert (2006) found 44% of teachers reported positive impact of the alternate assessment on daily instruction.
- Similarly, Flowers, Ahlgrim-Dezell, Browder, and Spooner (2005) found 36% of teachers in portfolio states reported the alternate assessment improved instruction.
- Flowers et al. (2005) also suggested that when teachers perceived alternate assessments to be a part of school accountability systems, more teachers reported a positive impact.



What does the research tell us?

- Flowers, Ahlgrim-DeLzell, Browder and Spooner (2005) suggest that reducing the amount of paperwork and providing teachers with more models of how to address state standards in appropriate ways could be helpful in achieving the purpose of alternate assessment.
 - Research needs to clearly document the extent to which alternate assessments are improving access to the general curriculum, especially for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
 - Teachers need research-based examples of how they can provide access, while still providing embedded functional skill instruction on those more basic skills that many students with significant disabilities require for enhanced independence and community participation.



What does the research tell us?

- Horvath, Kampfer-Bohach, and Kearns (2005) noted significant discrepancies between the accommodations that were listed on the IEP and those actually put into practice, suggesting a need for educator training in the use of accommodations during instruction, as well the identification of accommodations on the IEP.
 - It is crucial for researchers and educators to ensure that students are provided equal access to both the curriculum and the test content.



What does the research tell us?

- Browder, Karvonen, Davis, Fallin, and Courtade-Little (2005) found that when teachers received training on instructional practices and data-based decision making, students' alternate assessment scores improved in comparison with students of teachers who did not receive such training. The students of the teachers who received the training also made greater progress on their IEP objectives.
 - Findings from this study provided the “first evidence that alternate assessment scores can be improved through training teachers in instructional variables” (p. 277).
 - For teachers to understand how to teach and assess students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in language arts, math, and science, considerable training in the content will be necessary in the years to come.



Additional Research Considerations

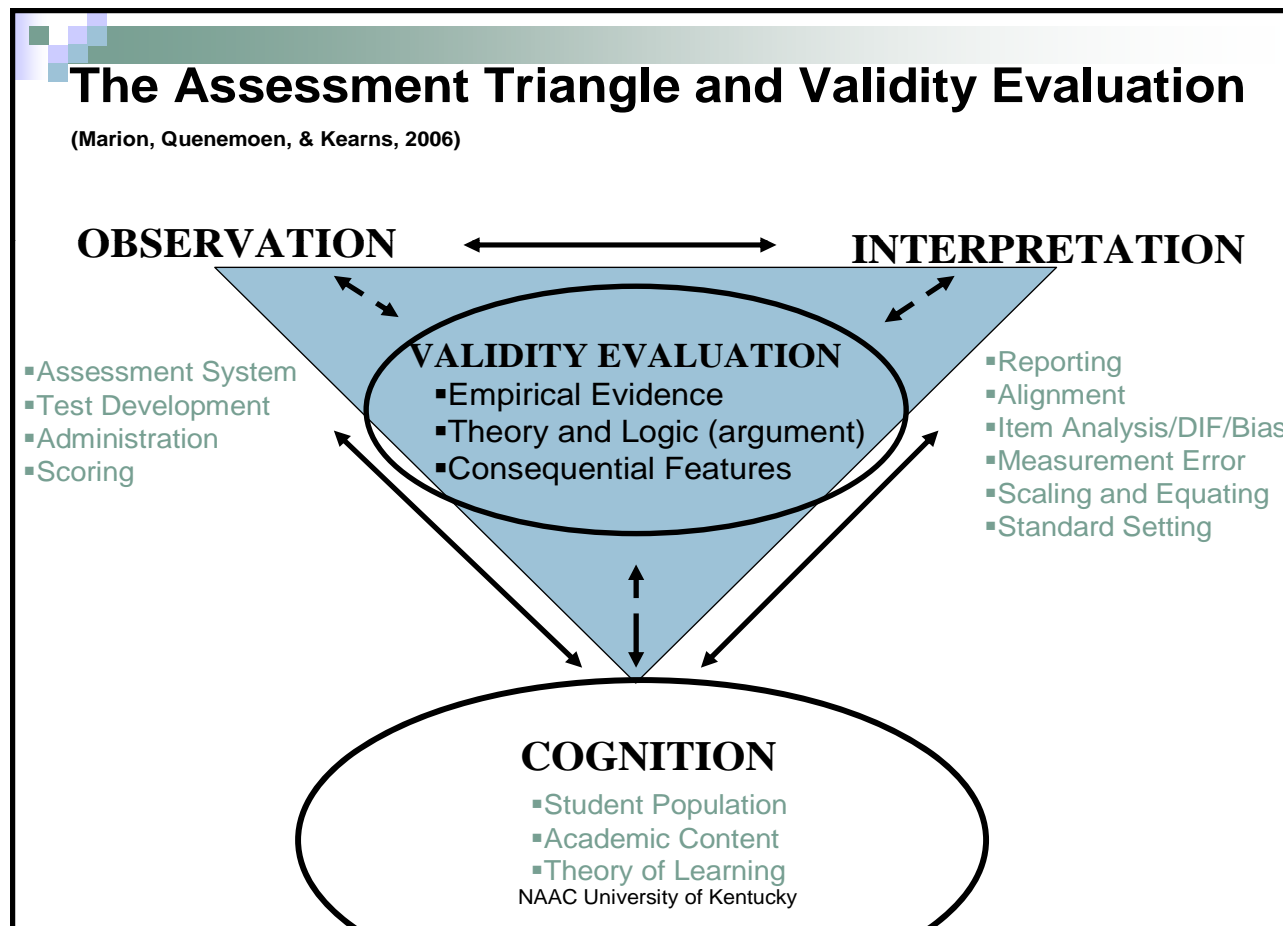
- Typical students acquire and store knowledge related to reading and mathematics in certain ways (see Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). Therefore, teachers target these learning styles in the classroom. For students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, researchers have yet to consider exactly how these students acquire and store knowledge.



Additional Research Considerations

- Linkage to grade-level content standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities presents challenges for practitioners. Practitioners must determine what constitutes sufficient “linkage”, and in many cases, this decision may fall to teachers and IEP teams.
 - For example, what does linkage look like for students who do not yet have symbolic modes of communication?

National Alternate Assessment Center Resources





Resources for Teachers

■ Presentations

- Who are the students who take alternate achievement standards assessments?
- Theory of learning: What should students with significant cognitive disabilities know and be able to do?
- Is it Reading, Is it Mathematics?
- Is it Science?
- Standards-based Science



Who are the Students who take alternate achievement standards assessments?

- Josh
- Leslie
- Rhiannah
- Sarah

Leslie

Josh

Rhiannah

Sarah



Who are the students?

- 98.40% of the students have some level of receptive language response
 - 1.6% exhibit uncertain responses to any stimuli

- 73.70% of the students in this sample use symbolic language to communicate expressively.
- 17.80% use intentional communication with pictures/objects and/or gestures but not at the symbolic language level.
- 8.50% of the sample



What do teachers need to know
and be able to do?

- **“Teachers as Experts: Share Your Alternate Assessment Administration Experiences!”**

- <http://www.naacpartners.org/OTS/default.aspx>



What Is Access to General Curriculum Content?

- Browder, D.M., Wakeman, S.Y., Flowers, C., Rickelman, R.J., Pugalee, D., & Karvonen, M. (In press). Creating access to the general curriculum with links to grade level content for students with significant cognitive disabilities. *Journal of Special Education*.


- Seven Criteria for Access to the General Curriculum
 - Four derived from federal policy
 - Three based on needs of population



Criterion 1: The Content is Academic

Self check

- ✓ I am familiar with my state standards
- ✓ I know the major strands of math, science, language arts/ reading
- ✓ I collaborate with general education teachers
- ✓ I realize that this might be difficult
- ✓ I may need to commit to some research and self-study to learn my state standards



Criterion 2- The student's assigned grade level is the point of reference

- Middle School (Grades (6-8))
- Literature of Focus: *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London
 - Students read chapters of book on grade level and
 - make diagram (e.g., fishbone) of story events describing cause and effect with evidence.
 - identify facts and opinions related to the characters
 - write a narrative comparing Phillip's quality of life before and after the boat accident using evidence from the text.



Criterion 3-The Achievement Level Differs from Grade Level

- Examples of Alternate Achievement for *The Call of the Wild*
 - Students hear chapter summaries read and participate using pictures, repeated story lines, and controlled vocabulary.
 - Students select pictures for fishbone diagram after hearing story.
 - Students use pictures to answer simple yes/no questions about characters in the story (e.g., Was Buck a dog?)
 - Students compare events from their own life to events in Buck's life in the story using a yes/no chart, and a Venn diagram.



Criterion 4- Differentiation in achievement across grade levels/bands

■ Elementary

- Children's picture books provide support for comprehension
- Stories have simpler themes and story lines
- Answers can more often be found on the page (matching)


■ Middle School

- Chapter books; student follows along in own book
 - This may be an adapted book
- Books may have picture symbol supports; objects may still be used to support comprehension
- Themes are more mature
- More content from which to glean answer

Criteria 5- Promote access to grade level activities, materials, contexts

- JAFTA – Thinking Map (by Bree Jimenez)





Criteria 6- Content centrality and when possible, performance centrality

- State Standard:
 - **Student will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of fiction**
- Content
 - Structure and elements of fiction
- Performance
 - Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of
- *Camilla will use her AAC to greet peers in English class*
 - Content? No
 - Performance? No
- *Camilla will choose a fictional story*
 - Content? Yes?
 - Performance? Some
- *Camilla will use pictures to identify components of a fictional story*
 - Content? Yes?
 - Performance? Stronger link



Criteria 7- Multiple levels of access to general curriculum

- *Some students with significant disabilities rely on nonsymbolic communication or may have limited intentionality in communication; consideration needs to be given to expectations for these students*

Steps To Align Instruction: From General Curriculum to IEP



- Domains to plan
- Grade level standards
- General educator
- Alternate achievement
- Alignment
- Enhancement
- Pivotal Skills for the IEP



Step One: Domains to Plan

- List the domains of content for each academic area to begin creating a curriculum planning chart
 - E.g., Mathematics may include data analysis, geometry, algebra, numbers and computation, measurement
 - Use the categories of your state standards
- List domains for functional domain planning



Step Two: Grade Level Focus & Priority Setting

- Identify the student's specific grade level
- Obtain the state standards for this student's grade level and any state extensions
 - Identify priority standards
- Collect information on priority functional skill needs
- Review together as an IEP team



Step Three: Plan with General Education Teacher

- For the priority standards, ask general educator to give examples of activities, materials, key concepts taught
 - To be sure everyone understands the standards and to create a framework for the next steps
- Discuss how teaching this typical content could be done using principles of UDL; share resources on UDL with team
 - This discussion can promote planning for all children from the beginning

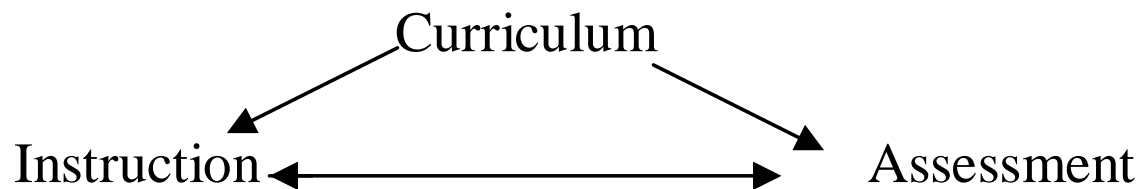


Step Four: Alternate Achievement

- Target what this student's goal for achievement will be related to grade level standards

Step 5: Double Check for Alignment

- A match between the written, taught, and tested curriculum






Step 6: Enhancement

- In this step we apply some of the values we have for working with students with significant disabilities to be sure the academic content we teach will be meaningful and beneficial



Value Added: Promote **literacy** across the curriculum


- Brian will eye gaze to select pictures to be included in a picture report for science
- Melissa will identify the main characters of a story by using pictures/ initial letter sounds for their names.
- Nadia will select the picture/word phrase that best summarizes the math problem to be solved.



Value added: Use **assistive technology** to increase active, independent responding

■ Examples

- John will read 10 complete sentences composed with Writing with Symbols using picture cues to identify at least one novel word per sentence.
- After using assistive technology to independently read a Start-to-Finish novel, Henry will answer five comprehension questions based on the novel.



Value added: Promote **Self** **Determination** in academic learning Choice-making

- Make choices within an activity
- Choose between two or more activities

■ Decision-making

- Decide topic for class project
- Determine best resource to use to get information

■ Problem-solving

- Look at a picture to determine why DVD player is not working
- Identify three alternative ways character in story could resolve a conflict



■ Goal setting

- Set a goal for number of books to be read in a month
- Identify and communicate IEP goals

■ Self management / self evaluation

- Use a bar graph to track number of assignments completed
- Rate self on how well performed on given assignment

■ Self awareness

- Develop picture/word list of likes and dislikes
- Develop and learn to read a list of “facts about me”



Value Added: Apply Academic Skill to a **Real Life Activity**

- Academic skills can be taught in functional, meaningful contexts
- Consider the students chronological age and life environments (home, work, leisure, community)



Examples of Functional Applications

- How do we get from the music store to the food court when we go to the mall?
 - To practice drawing a line segment
- Recipe for Sweet Southern Tea
 - Sugar melts better in the boiled water; steep the tea; then ice...to apply how temperature affects solvents (Chemistry)



Step Six: Writing the IEP

- Look at the curriculum map that has been created
 - Domains of academic content
 - Priority standards from the grade level & functional skills
 - How these standards are typically taught
 - Achievement targets
 - Double check alignment
 - Enhance it- literacy, self determination, AT, functional



The IEP

- Do not try to write a goal/ objective for each standard!!!!!!!!!!!!
- An IEP is not meant to be the curriculum; an IEP shows how students ACCESS the curriculum



The IEP

- Instead, look for pivotal skills that will access the target standards. Examples-
 - Skills to indicate comprehension
 - E.g., point to select correct picture
 - Skills to synthesize learning
 - E.g., develop a report
 - Skills to gain information
 - E.g., ask a question; find internet site
 - Core content to be taught to mastery
 - E.g., target vocabulary



The IEP will have...

- Goals to access general curriculum academic content
- Functional goals
- Therapy goals
- Social goals
- Etc.



Personnel Preparation

- Providing preparation to teach to the standards
 - Knowledge of strands of academic content
 - Familiarity with the standards
 - Skills in how to extend for students with various levels and types of disabilities
 - Skills for teaching academics



Options (Ideally all three)

- Increased coursework in general curriculum content (e.g., Teaching Math)
- Coursework on diversifying instruction/ UDL (Be sure course includes this population)
- Course specifically on teaching general curriculum content to students with moderate & severe disabilities



“Catching Up” Teachers in the Field

- Options states are trying
 - Curriculum training institutes involving higher education from both special/ general education
 - Using portfolio scoring as professional development
 - Series of workshops paired with support (chat rooms, model sites, consulting teacher, teaching circles)



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New Resources

- Browder, D.M., Ahlgrim-Dezell, L., Courtade-Little, G., & Snell, M.E. (2006). Access to the general curriculum. In M.E. Snell & F. Brown (Eds.). *Instruction of students with severe disabilities*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Browder, D.M., & Spooner, F.H. (2006). *Teaching reading, math, and science to students with significant cognitive disabilities*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Courtade-Little, G. & Browder, D.M. & (2005). *Aligning IEPs to academic content standards*. Madison, WI: Attainment Co.