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Sharpen Your Skills with TASH Training

Throughout the year TASH offers a number of training opportunities on current topics impacting the disability community. Each training session features leading experts, research and analysis, compelling personal stories and real world examples that participants can use to relate each session to their work or life. Topics are always changing, so view a list of current opportunities below. If there is a subject that you’d like to see covered in a future TASH Training, you can send an e-mail with your thoughts.

**PECS and PODD: How Both Options Promote Communication**  
*Presented May 15 by Kristin Lucas*

**Fostering Friendships for All Abilities in All Activities**  
*Presented May 20 by Kathleen Costello*

**Talk WITH Me! Communication Strategies that Empower Students with Significant Disabilities**  
*Presented June 5 by Jan Writer*

**Anxiety and Autism: Understanding First Hand Perspective**  
*Presented June 12 by Stephen Hinkle*

For more information and to register visit http://tash.org/training or contact Rick Green at rgreen@tash.org
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Welcome to the latest issue of Connections.

We are happy to present you with some stimulating, thought-provoking articles. The topic of this issue is what should serve as educational standards for students with significant disabilities. Lou Brown argues that standards should lead to functional outcomes, Michael Brady says let’s not forget about individualization and McDonnell, Hunt, Jackson, and Ryndak say there is merit in a blended curriculum approach based on person-centered planning that should include functional outcomes as well as academic skills.

Lou Brown’s article on alternative educational standards for students with significant intellectual disabilities gave me a lot to think about. Because of our interactions in TASH, Lou had shared an earlier version of this paper with me some time ago and I was as impressed by it then as I am now. As Lou noted, there has been a distinct curricular shift in educating students with intellectual disabilities and this article suggests that we should pause and not forget about the importance of how our curriculum influences life outcomes. The other articles also prodded my thinking. Brady maintains that “The return to individualization should be the driving principle to implementing educational standards for students with severe disabilities.” Also not disagreeing with Brown’s intent, McDonnell and his colleagues argue, “We believe that the best way forward is to reconcile an ecological curricular framework focusing on quality of life outcomes with the underlying intent of high academic expectations and accountability for students with significant intellectual disabilities that are embedded within grade-level standards.”

As you may know, all of these writers are well-respected scholars and their opinions merit consideration. I am proud that through Connections, TASH can offer its membership the quality of thought contained in this issue.

As I write this letter, a friend of mine with the same first name as me is planning for his graduation at Western Carolina University. David, who has Down Syndrome, will be among the first three individuals with intellectual disabilities to participate in the university’s commencement program. And it is a commencement indeed, because after David graduates, his internship position as a member of the emergency medical services in his hometown will become a paid position. David has plans to move back to his part of North Carolina and to enjoy a great life after his college experience. To help out, some 20 plus friends of David and his family have formed a natural support system that will assure that David will enjoy living and working in an inclusive community. As I looked at Lou Brown’s standards in this issue, I am happy to say that David has achieved them all to the best of his ability. So again, I think you will find his thoughts, as well as those of the other writers, of great importance.

David Westling
President, TASH Board
Who Has the Power?

In 1991, TASH co-founder Lou Brown wrote:

…if we have learned anything at all over the past 20 years, it is that there are some aspects of a person’s life that we have no right to compromise. We cannot negotiate the size of an institution—no one should live in one. We cannot function on a committee to determine who does and who does not get medical treatment—everyone does. We cannot debate who should get an integrated education—all must. Just because we are overwhelmed, frustrated and at a loss for something to do, we cannot tolerate shocks, slaps, pinches, or any other obnoxious violation of dignity. Let the moderates, compromisers, and data worshippers go elsewhere. Let the people of TASH be value based, unbending, tough, aggressive, assertive, graceful, compassionate, and effective.


These words, written more than 20 years ago, are powerful—and apt for the situation we face today. We wait while Congress considers a bill to prevent restraint and seclusion use that was first introduced in 2009—and while we wait, thousands of children are damaged by restraint and seclusion use in schools. We’ve waited more than 10 years for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. We had hoped that the flaws uncovered in the 2000 No Child Left Behind Act would be fixed by now. In the face of huge waiting lists, unacceptable education outcomes, chronic low unemployment, and poor implementation of the Olmstead Decision, NOTHING is happening in Congress to fix a set of systems which are in need of massive modernization.

We can choose to be overwhelmed, frustrated and at a loss for something to do—OR: we can gather up our individual and collective power and choose to act!

Choosing to act means continuing to work with Congress while they argue AND exercising power as advocates at state and local levels. TASH members have POWER: power that comes in the form of experience, subject matter expertise, commitment and networks. TASH members are consistently on the right side on questions of social justice. We know that given opportunity, people can thrive—and kept isolated, people are chronically dependent. In a tough economic climate, we’ve learned to ask for cross-system modernization to empower people to become contributing citizens, and end systems that support “cyclical dependency”. (See http://tash.org/tsko)

TASH is excited about the work of the Gamaliel Foundation. Gamaliel is a grassroots network of non-partisan, faith-based organizations in 17 U.S. states, South Africa and the United Kingdom that organizes to empower ordinary people to effectively participate in the political, environmental, social and economic decisions affecting their lives. Their issues are TASH issues: equity in education, job opportunity, transportation, good housing, and health care. TASH began working with Gamaliel this summer on restraint and seclusion prevention, following an introduction from member Mary Shuh of University of New Hampshire. Mary invited Gamaliel national trainer John Norton to work with families impacted by restraint and seclusion use, and these families have had several successes on the local, national and state level. Gamaliel Foundation trainers will be at the TASH conference, leading a workshop on grassroots advocacy on Wednesday, December 11th. Mary Gonzalez, Gamaliel’s co-founder, will keynote the Opening Session on Wednesday afternoon. Her advocacy was first inspired by a need to access better services for her brother, who had multiple disabilities. This is a session you won’t want to miss: your perspective of power will be transformed.

If you find yourself “overwhelmed, frustrated and at a loss for something to do”—this is the time to find new ways to make a difference! Locating people in our communities who have similar agendas and needs is not difficult—joining in common cause with them is powerful! Who knows who our best allies will be? Join TASH co-founder Lou Brown, Mary Gonzalez, and other advocacy champions at this year’s conference and reclaim our power as a broader, deeply engaged Movement United!

Barbara Trader
TASH Executive Director
What knowledge is of most worth?

Herbert Spencer asked this question well over 150 years ago. The question was posed during a time when the scope of schooling was narrow, only serving an elite constituency and the knowledge deemed most worthy had little resemblance from what we know today. Assumptions about education have long been complicated by disagreements about that should be educated and to what extent. Some assume that lower achieving students should receive only the most basic education, while higher achieving students should be exposed to more. While these notions may seem completely unreasonable, at least to some, our society has become progressively more inclusive and with that inclusion, it is appropriate to ask-are we now where we should or expect to be? What standards might serve as a foundation for educating all children, including those with the most significant disabilities? Do standards make a difference and if so, to what extent?

In this issue, readers will be introduced to a well thought out treatise on educational standards. Additionally, there is a practical contribution detailing ideas about how math content area standards might be taught. Finally, there is a commentary on the opening treatise, encouraging serious reflection on notions about standards from the past and how we might formulate our thinking in the near future.

This issue will serve as opening statement on educational standards with much more about standards and specifically the common core to come as we move toward a national curriculum for all children. Many more questions than answers will emerge first, but with any new educational movement, dialogue is key if any conclusions are to be drawn. Look forward to a thorough discussion about the foundation of a comprehensive education for children and adults with severe disabilities.

A Letter from the Editor

It has been widely accepted since the late 1970’s that the educational programs of students with severe disabilities should be based on an ecological curriculum framework that focuses instruction on preparing students to live, work, and recreate in the community. In 2004 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was amended to require students to participate in the general education curriculum and to be assessed annually on their progress in meeting grade-level standards in reading, math, and science. Given the widespread acceptance of ecological curriculum frameworks by the field, it is not surprising that these mandates have sparked a vigorous dialog about which curriculum approach best meets the needs of this group of students.

TASH has strongly supported students’ access to the general education curriculum, and has encouraged advocacy and research to ensure that their participation is equitable and effective. Indeed, there is a growing research base that demonstrates that students with severe disabilities not only can learn complex academic content, but also that they can learn this material in general education classes alongside their peers without disabilities.

In spite of this progress, there are still legitimate concerns about how student’s participation in the general education curriculum might impact their short-term and long-term quality of life.

In this issue, Lou Brown, a longtime TASH member and one of the leading researchers in our field, critiques the evolution of the standards-based movement and the potential impacts of the 2004 amendments to IDEA on the preparation of students for adulthood and community living. Based on his analysis he offers nine alternate standards that he argues would be more effective in improving students’ long-term quality of life than those included in states’ general education curricula. Comments on Lou’s proposals are offered by Michael Brady, and by John McDonnell, Pam Hunt, Lewis Jackson, and Diane Ryndak. We hope that these articles extend the on-going discussions on the roles of ecological curriculum frameworks and the general education curriculum in students’ educational programs.

John McDonnell and Erik Carter
Guest Co-Editors of Connections
In 2004, President Bush’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities studied the employment status of the lowest intellectually functioning 3% of the adult USA population and concluded that 90% were unemployed or grossly underemployed (PCPID, 2004).

A number of others reported similar findings (Harris, 2000; Magliore & Butterworth, 2008; Newman et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2012; and The National Council on Disability, 2000). Governor Jeb Bush of Florida established a task force to study the status of Floridians labeled developmentally disabled and reported an unemployment rate of 80% (FAPD, 2004). Many individuals with disabilities exit school and enter community colleges or vocational/technical schools. After brief stays, they flunk or drop out and join the ranks of the unemployed (Simon, 2012; U.S. Committee on Health, Education Labor and Pensions, 2012). Almost 300,000 spend their lives missing real opportunities to approximate their potential while restricted to relatively expensive segregated sheltered workshops (Wehman, 2011). Price (2012) reported that in 2011, Ohio spent $175 million restricting individuals with disabilities to segregated workshops and a mere $5 million to keep them employed in the community. Further, the cost of sheltered workshops was $22,000 per person per year while the cost of supporting similar individuals in integrated work settings was less than $9,600 per year. Recently, Oregon was found out of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act by the U. S. Department of Justice for restricting far too many individuals with disabilities to segregated workshops and thus not affording reasonable access to integrated work opportunities (Perez, 2012a). Confining persons with significant intellectual disabilities to large public or private residential institutions are no longer options. The extremely high taxpayer costs and the unbearable histories of abuse, neglect and wasted lives have resulted in less than 40,000 out of a population of 310 million remaining in these intolerable places. Tragically, increasing numbers are being confined to terribly inappropriate nursing homes and many thousands stay where they live all day doing little, if anything, meaningful (Perez, 2012b). These and related realities place tremendous strains on aging parents, family members and taxpayers.

The education of all handicapped children became a national legal requirement in 1975. It and subsequent revisions have been operative for more than 35 years. Thousands of students with significant intellectual disabilities have received up to 21 years of educational and related services and consumed billions of tax dollars. Still, each year more and more graduate with no foreseeable employment options and often end up spending too much time at home. The post school outcomes experienced by individuals with significant intellectual disabilities in the USA are harmful, cost inefficient, depressing and unacceptable. Indeed, when school outcomes are considered, versions of the Education of all Handicapped Children Act are empirically “the education of all handicapped children with no meaningful skills acts.” Are all adults with significant intellectual disabilities unemployed? Absolutely not. Each year increasing numbers receive the training

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**Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities**

*Lou Brown, Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin*
and extra supports needed to perform real work, in the real world for extended periods of time (Brown, Shiraga & Kessler, 2006; Certo et al.; 2006; Wehman, 2006). Why do some have real jobs while the vast majority does not? Little is due to intellectual capabilities. Much is due to poorly trained professionals, inadequate and irrelevant instruction, low expectations, the lack or paucity of local opportunities and the absence of long-term post school extra supports (Certo et al., 2009). We know how to and actually do produce good employment, residential and social school outcomes for some. It is time to change our ways and produce them for the many thousands of others who so desperately need them.

The Students and the Dangers of Developmentalism

Students with significant intellectual disabilities refers to the lowest intellectually functioning 1 - 2% of a naturally distributed school age population. Several of their extremely important learning and performance characteristics are delineated below. None can be denied or dishonored and it is extremely important that they are honored concurrently.

The Number of Skills That Can Be Learned. These students can learn many skills, but less than 98 - 99% of all others. Thus, only the most important skills they can and should learn in order to function effectively in integrated society should be selected for instruction. Teaching unimportant skills, those they really do not need to know, those that will never be used and will therefore be forgotten, those that will be obsolete or chronological age inappropriate soon after they are acquired, those that will not be generalized/transferred and those that waste valuable educational time is unacceptable.

Difficulty Range. If these students are required to try to learn or perform skills that are too simple; i.e., at the lower ends of their difficulty ranges, they are not challenged, they become bored and underachieve. If they are required to try to learn or perform skills that are too complex, too abstract, and too symbolic or otherwise out of their difficulty ranges, they cannot learn them, they become frustrated and underachieve. The best instructional practice is to select important skills that are accessible and near the upper ends of difficulty ranges.

Observational Learning. Almost all are capable of acquiring rudimentary observational learning skills, including those necessary to imitate - the ability to match or approximate some of the actions of models. This makes it extremely important that they function in the presence of the best possible communication, work, social and behavior models.

The Number of Instructional Opportunities. Most typically need many more opportunities to learn important skills in their difficulty ranges than all others. Thus, individually appropriate numbers of opportunities to learn important skills at the upper end of each difficulty range must be provided. If they are not provided, acquisition and accumulation will be extremely limited, if realized at all.

Practice. Without practice these students forget more and take longer to relearn what was forgotten than all others. This requires that we do not teach skills without arranging for reasonable practice opportunities. Knowing that forgetting will occur and then allowing it to happen is wasteful, harmful and professionally irresponsible.

Generalization/Transfer of Training. They have major difficulties generalizing/transferring training across similar but different conditions. If artificial or simulated instructional conditions are used, they should be as close as possible to authentic - real - conditions. However, even if artificial or simulated conditions are used, performance under authentic conditions must be validated empirically or developed.

Synthesis. More intellectually able students are remarkably good at synthesizing isolated bits of information. The students of concern are not. We know how to teach them many important skills in their difficulty ranges, but we also know they rarely synthesize them effectively. Thus, school officials are responsible for engineering synthesis by arranging for them to perform skills learned in meaningful clusters and contexts.

If a student is chronologically 5, but functioning as a normal 2 year old, the developmentalist argues that our responsibility is to “Start where she is and then take her to the next developmental step.” Thus, all available resources are focused upon teaching her the skills of a typically developing 3 year old. The problem is that this “developmental milestone” is reached, at age 10. If all we know is developmentalism, all we can do is “Consider where she is and then take her to the next step”. The next developmental step is to teach her to act like a typical 4 year old. We do and she reaches that important “benchmark” at chronological age 14. Then we start teaching her to act like a typical five year old. We continue this progression until she finishes her school career. Tragically, we systematically increased rather than decreased
differences between her and chronological age peers. Every child should be given reasonable opportunities to progress through normal human development stages. However, the myopic, longitudinal and inflexible quest to impose educational standards based upon or derived from normal human development theories and hypotheses is far too often harmful to individuals with significant intellectual disabilities. When performance discrepancies increase, the concepts and practices that directly support integrated outcomes at school exit must be substituted for those based on developmentalism.

The Educational Standards Movement

Since the 1990’s “educational standards” have been among the most contentious, divisive and controversial phenomena in education. Those concerned with having educational systems equal to or better than Singapore, Finland and other countries want to raise academic standards in the USA. Business owners want schools that produce graduates with the skills needed in the economies and industries of the 21st century. Almost all parents want higher standards for their children established and met. Many offer that life without a high school diploma can only be marginal. Some believe that if you do not have a college degree, you are doomed to a life at minimum wages. Reactions to these related phenomena have been quite interesting.

First, absolutist language and fanciful conceptualizations of public education became politically popular. “Every child will read by the third grade”; “No child will be left behind” and, “Abolish social promotion “are examples. Second, there was a strong demand to rely on grade level scores on independently administered standardized academic achievement tests to validate educational progress or the lack thereof. Some even proposed that all students should be required to take the same academic achievement tests in the same way. If students did not obtain a particular score on an approved standardized academic achievement test, they could not advance to the next grade or school level, earn a high school diploma or be admitted to a post secondary educational institution supported by tax dollars. Third, there was a powerful movement to exclude all but grade level academic content from the general education curriculum. No more “mickey mouse”, “dumbed down” or “watered down” resource wasters. Fourth, there were many calls for increasing the number of required school days and hours per year and concomitant increases in course and credit requirements. Fifth, some argued that public schools do not work, are beyond repair and are terrible wastes of scarce and valuable tax dollars. Their solution was to issue vouchers backed by tax dollars and allow students who choose to do so to use them to escape to private, charter or other educational institutions. Sixth, some operated from the premise that school officials are responsible for the progress of the children in their care and must be held accountable for the results. If students do not achieve satisfactorily, school boards should be disbanded and mayors should take over school systems, teachers and administrators should be fired or schools should be closed or reconstituted with new and better personnel. Seventh, some demanded that instruction be based upon credible scientific evidence. There is no doubt that when these and similar policies and practices were implemented, the grade level standardized academic achievement and school exit test scores of many were enhanced. Conversely, there is no doubt that these and similar policies and practices produced disastrous effects on far too many others, particularly those with a wide variety of disabilities and children of families with low incomes in urban school districts.

The Fusion of Academic Standards and Inclusion

The academic achievement standards movement seemed so necessary, made so much sense as a national priority, was concerned with doing good for so many, it was easy to understand why many wanted to give it a chance to succeed or become a part of it. Some Special Educators adopted many of the basic tenets of the academic achievement standards movement and decided to seek ways in which students with significant intellectual disabilities could be included. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (PL 107 - 110), The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (PL 105 - 17), The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (PL 108 - 446) and the U.S. Department of Education (2005) required that students with disabilities have access to grade level general education academic curricular content and participate in district and state level accountability assessments. It was also required that students with disabilities be assessed in the same grade level academic content areas as all other students and that the assessment strategies utilized mirror those used with all other students. The major purposes of these requirements seemed to be to ensure that students with significant intellectual disabilities were included in statewide accountability systems and to encourage academic achievement. Finally, gains in academic achievement were to be followed by financial and other rewards or sanctions (Harr Robins, et al., 2012).
Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities

Requiring that educational achievement standards be the same as, mirror or be closely “linked” to general education grade level academic curricular content (High Fidelity) was devastating for students with significant intellectual disabilities. Consider the following.

Jonas, a student with significant intellectual disabilities, was in a high school English class that was studying idiomatic expressions, the multiple meanings of words, contained in Steinbeck’s “Of Mice and Men.” The curricular “linkage” for him was to try to teach him to match a word card to a picture of a tube of bologna (the luncheon meat) as well as to a picture of inflated balloons (Kleinert, Kearns and Kleinert, 2010).

Wakeman et al. (2010) report that a student with significant intellectual disabilities could be taught such “linked” History content as touching a card with the word “constitution” printed on it in response to a teacher provided verbal cue when presented with four cards that contain different words. They also provide the “linked” Science example of teaching a student point to the core and the crust on a topographical model of planet Earth in response to verbal cues to do so.

Ahlgrim Denzell, Rickelman and Clayton (2010) consider teaching a student with significant intellectual disabilities to use a graphic illustrator to sequence a series of pictures about the life of Paul Bunyan in chronological order an acceptable “linkage.”

Courtade, Taub and Burdge (2010) suggest the “linkage” of having a student with significant intellectual disabilities in a high school Science class match a picture of a rock to an actual rock.

Are those skills “linked” to grade level academic curricular content? Yes. If we were asked to list 1000 of the most important skills we need to teach students with significant intellectual disabilities by school exit, would they be on our list? No. Consider the “linked” grade level academic skill of teaching a student with significant intellectual disabilities to touch a rock when presented with a picture of that rock in a high school Science classroom. Were measures of generalization required or taken? No. Where but in the Science class would the student be required to perform the skill? How often would he need to practice it so he would not forget it? Probably daily. Will it matter if a student is rated “Proficient” on this skill? No. Would this skill be important in his post school life? No. Is there an alternative that would yield better returns on scarce and valuable educational resources? Definitely.

Fortunately, each state is allowed to generate alternative assessment strategies and alternative achievement standards (AA - AAS) for students who cannot participate meaningfully in general education assessments, even with accommodations. In addition, students with disabilities are legally entitled to Individualized Educational Programs (IEPS) and Individualized School to Post School Transition Plans (ITPS) that address nonacademic needs and skills associated with their disabilities (Musgrove, 2012). Nonacademic skills are those generally considered functional, social, motor, vocational, communication, travel, shopping, personal maintenance, domestic living, etc. These individualization mandates and the option to create and utilize alternative assessment strategies and alternative achievement standards afford legal and professional license to engender reasonable departures from rigid and myopic adherence to confining instructional content to that appropriate for more intellectually able students. In short, the concern is not with the need for alternative assessment strategies and alternative achievement standards but with those chosen for development and use. The portfolios of students with significant intellectual disabilities at school exit are too important to be confined to the grade level academic curricular content appropriate for those much more intellectually able.

Curricular Fidelity

If the lowest intellectually functioning 1 - 2% of a naturally distributed school district experienced the exact same curricula as all other students, 100% Fidelity would be operative. As few, if anyone, would so require or recommend, an important issue then becomes “How far from the curricular experiences offered students without intellectual disabilities can we depart and still be in compliance with the letters and spirits of relevant state and federal laws and administrative codes and best instructional practices” (Browder et al., 2009)? Substantial and individually determined flexibility based upon the integrated post school outcomes desired and the individualized accommodations and related experiences needed to realize them are clearly appropriate.

- If a skill is closely “linked” to general education grade level academic curricular content (High Fidelity) and it is important for a student with significant intellectual disabilities and if she/he is capable of learning it, we should attempt to teach it.
- If a skill is closely “linked” to general education grade level academic curricular content (High Fidelity) and it is important for a student with significant intellectual disabilities and if she/he is capable of learning it, we should attempt to teach it.
Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities

Fidelity) and it is important for a student with significant intellectual disabilities but she/he is incapable of learning it, we should not attempt to teach it.

If a skill is closely “linked” to general education grade level academic curricular content (High Fidelity) and it is not important for a student with significant intellectual disabilities but she/he is capable of learning it, we should not attempt to teach it.

If a skill is not closely “linked” to general education grade level academic curricular content (Low Fidelity) but it is important for a student with significant intellectual disabilities and she/he is capable of learning it, we should attempt to teach it.

A Diploma Is Not An Outcome

Some school districts claim that almost 100% of their students exit their schools with Standard, General Education Degree or IEP diplomas. Does this mean that all who are awarded a diploma have met the same educational standards? No. Does this mean that college admission officers can be confident that one who has a diploma has the academic skills needed for success in the first year of college? No. Does this mean that an employer can trust that twelfth grade level academic skills are in the repertoires of the graduates? No. Does this mean that all who earn or are awarded a diploma can read at the third grade level? No. What can we confidently infer about a student with a high school diploma? Very little, or close to it. If we cannot trust grades, credits, course titles or letters of recommendation from school personnel, how can we make reasonably valid predictive decisions about the meaning of a diploma? Indeed, high school diplomas are like going to the senior prom, on the senior trip or participating in a graduation ceremony. They are nice to experience, but they are not meaningful school outcomes.

Everyone wants a diploma to mean something, so what can we do? We can establish a set of relatively high academic standards for all students, establish grade level academic admission standards for all classes and school levels, do away with social promotion and then watch tragically large numbers continue to fail and either refuse to come to or to drop out of school. Conversely, we can establish admission and progression standards that are so low all who can breathe can meet them. If we do that, what do we tell parents, employers, taxpayers, military recruiters, school board members, college admission personnel and the general citizenry when they ask us what a public school education means? If educational standards are conceptualized abstractly, it is relatively easy to agree on those that are appropriate for all: “Be prepared to succeed in the 21st century”; “Be a constructive and productive citizen.” However, given the extremely wide range of intellectual capabilities of millions of students, one set of standards for all is too nebulous and abstract. The educational standards we establish for the most intellectually able of the school age population should overlap but in some ways should be dramatically different from those we establish for the least intellectually able. If one size does not fit all, how many sizes should we have? How do we decide who gets which size?

If a school district chooses to award diplomas, either one or various levels and kinds, to all, so be it.

Schools should be safe, fair to all, fun, social, equitable, engendering of maximal individual achievement and respectful of and responsive to individual religious, familial and cultural differences.

A portion of each school day is an end in itself and all involved should try to make the most of each moment. However, a portion of each school day is also a means to an end and should be devoted to realizing the end of living, working and playing in integrated society, doing as much as possible for oneself, making the fewest possible demands on others and being the best possible citizen.

Students of dramatically different intellectual abilities need, deserve and should be provided different educational experiences that are designed to produce different integrated outcomes.

Nine Meaningful Educational Standards

Our primary concern is to generate educational standards and practices that result in meaningful integrated post school outcomes (Brown, Nietupski & Hamre Nietupski, 1976). The task of delineating all the skills that could or should be in the repertoires of all students with significant intellectual disabilities as they exit school is beyond the purpose here. Thus, only nine of the many possible important outcome driven achievement standards are addressed. It is the responsibility of each IEP team to decide upon and operationalize individually meaningful skill clusters and the associated assessment strategies and achievement standards. Few, if any, standards can be met perfectly. Fortunately, we do not have to be perfect in order to live, work and play in integrated society.
Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities

**Responsibility and Accountability.** What if you learned that 90% of the students who attended this expensive segregated school for 21 years were unemployed at school exit and remained so the rest of their lives? What if you learned that the only individuals who interact with these students in post school life are others with disabilities, family members and persons paid to do so? What if you learned that these students will live at home until their parents die and then they will be remanded to group or nursing homes? What if you learned that the students you have been paid to educate for 21 years can do almost nothing for and by themselves because you arranged for others to do so much for them? What if …………… Accountability, in this context, refers to assuming responsibility for the outcomes of educational services provided. General education officials are held accountable if a high percentage of the students they serve do not qualify for admission to colleges. That is, they are reprimanded, put on probation and required to do better in the near future, fired, transferred to less important jobs, etc. What should the school officials responsible for the education of students with significant intellectual disabilities be held accountable for? Preparing them to live work and play as cost efficiently as possible in a wide array of integrated environments and activities at school exit. If the students they are responsible for cannot do so, Special Education officials should be reprimanded, put on probation and required to do better in the near future, fired, transferred to less important jobs, etc. What should the school officials responsible for the education of students with significant intellectual disabilities be held accountable for? Preparing them to live work and play as cost efficiently as possible in a wide array of integrated environments and activities at school exit. If the students they are responsible for cannot do so, Special Education officials should be reprimanded, put on probation and required to do better in the near future, fired, transferred to less important jobs, etc.

**Home Schools, General Education Classes and Authentic Assessment and Instruction.** In almost all instances, the students of concern can be prepared best for integrated lives at school exit if they attend the same schools and many of the same general education classes they would attend if they were not disabled (Brown, Long et. al. 1989; Causton et. al. 2011). However, the nine standards presented cannot be met or even closely approximated without the longitudinal and comprehensive use of authentic assessment and instruction strategies (Brown, 2005; Brown Nisbet et. al. 1983). Authentic assessment and instruction are evidenced based practices that require arranging for a student to participate in an authentic - real - activity and empirically validating the nature of his/her repertoire as she/he actually engages therein. Then, empirical verification of acceptable performance in real environments and activities is developed. A major requirement of authentic assessment and instruction is that serious consideration be given to knowing and honoring the learning and performance characteristics of each student. There are thousands of valuable uses of authentic assessment and instruction in schools, homes, work places, recreation/leisure environments and general community settings. Consider the teacher who constructed a five item pictorial list of food items Jon's family typically buys in the market they use most often. Then she took Jon to the market, gave him the list and assessed how well he could complete the required skill sequence. He could not perform the actual sequence appropriately. Thus, the specific skills he needed to learn, the materials needed, the performance criteria appropriate for the setting, the adaptations and commitments for practice responsibilities, etc. were decided upon. Some of the needed skills could be best taught at school and followed by generalization/transfer checks until criterion performance was realized in the real market. Matching a picture to a box of cereal to an actual box of same is an example. However, skills such as finding a particular item from among hundreds in a busy food market aisle are best taught in the actual market. Prior to instruction, family members agreed to assume practice responsibilities when he learned the skills of concern. When he successfully performs the sequence in accordance with the minimally acceptable standards of the integrated food market, items could be added to the list, he could be taught to shop in a pharmacy, etc. These and similar skill clusters can be learned and performed in context throughout his life. In short, instruction in home schools and in general education classes must be gradually reduced starting no later than the first year of high school. When not in general education classes in home schools, the students should be receiving instruction in the integrated environments and activities in which they will or most likely will function at school exit. If authentic assessment and instruction are not provided, integrated functioning in post school years is minimized, if not denied. If they are provided only during the few years after peers without disabilities exit school, there is not enough time to teach the necessary skills.

**Standard # 1. Be Nice and Manifest a Good Work Ethic**

If a person with significant intellectual disabilities is reasonably nice to others and appears to be at least trying to give her/his best effort, most individuals without disabilities will extend themselves to accommodate to limitations. In most instances the inverse is also accurate. Thus, two extremely important skill clusters that must be developed are being nice to others and expending best efforts.
Articles from our Contributors

Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities

Standard #2. Use Meaningful Academic Skills

Should attempts be made to teach the lowest intellectually functioning 1–2% of our students individually determined arrays of grade level academic skills in such domains as Reading, Math, Science, Civics, Geography, History, Literature, Economics and the Arts? Yes. But the time and other resources devoted to teaching them must be prioritized and balanced in relation to many other kinds of critically needed skills. The academic skills selected for instruction must offer reasonable chances for acquisition and must be appropriately performed in an array of current and meaningful school and nonschool environments and activities. If such arrangements are not operative, there will be little, if any, generalization/transfer, practice, much forgetting, little accumulation and unnecessary and unaffordable waste. One way to address this standard is to construct a Cumulative Academic Skills Booklet. Assume a child is 3 and we analyze the academic skills in her/his repertoire. Each IEP should include a component specific to the development, maintenance and enhancement of a healthy range of meaningful grade level academic skills. It is extremely important that the academic skill repertoires of persons with significant intellectual disabilities be inventoried, practiced and expanded annually so that when they exit school they are using them to function effectively in a wide array of integrated environments and activities.

Standard #3. Function In a Reasonable Array of Environments

The vast majority of the students of concern does not function in, have access to or otherwise experience the same number of environments as do individuals without disabilities. One way to continually address and correct for this unfortunate reality is to construct a Cumulative Environments Booklet. Assume a child is chronologically 3 and we count the number of environments she and local chronological age peers experience. If there are no differences, celebrate. However, if she functions in fewer environments, all reasonable efforts must be made to minimize the differences. If this process is engaged in annually, at school exit she should be functioning in close to the same number of environments as chronological age peers without disabilities. Some operate from the premise that first we should teach many skills in a few environments, a home and a school, and then hope the students will generalize/transfer those skills to many other settings and contexts. When the well documented generalization/transfer of training difficulties as well as the terrible post school outcomes reported above are considered, the absurdity and dangers of this strategy are obvious. First, we must increase the number of environments in which a student functions. Then, we must enhance functioning in each: a home, a school, a park, a workplace, a public bus, a library, the house of a friend, a store, a Girl Scout meeting place, etc. This will ensure the person can function in a more typical array of environments at school exit. If someone other than school personnel provides such instruction, school personnel can focus upon other skills. The tragic reality is that as no one else can or does and too many lives are terribly and unnecessarily constricted.

Standard #4. Enjoy a Reasonable Social Relationship Range

The overwhelming majority of the students of concern are restricted from opportunities to develop reasonable ranges of social relationships with peers without disabilities. As a result: they spend inordinate amounts of time in solitary activities; they spend excessive amounts of time with adult family members and paid caregivers who almost always become unnaturally intrusive in their lives; extraordinary pressures are placed upon family members to arrange, provide, pay for and transport them to and from time filling activities of dubious value; and, the environments and activities most often arranged are segregated and therefore restrictive. When children are born we do all we can to insure they survive and thrive. As they get older we are responsible for teaching or otherwise arranging for them to interact effectively with more and more individuals. Most parents do this naturally and without much difficulty. Because most children want to become involved with others, such growth and development is generally assumed and underappreciated. Thus, few parents of children without disabilities keep empirical records of the annual growth of the social relationship range of their children. Parents of children with significant intellectual disabilities and others involved in their lives can afford no such luxury. In far too many instances, loneliness and isolation are the worst disabilities. This reality provides one of the most important reasons why the students of concern must attend schools that also serve large numbers of students without disabilities who live near them. Specifically, home schools offer opportunities to develop decent ranges of social relationships and ultimately meaningful social networks. Nonhome schools do not. Without the premeditated, systematic and otherwise engineered interventions of people in authority over long periods of time, the development of critically needed arrays of social relationships is at best impeded.
and in far too many instances prevented. Eleven of the many nonmutually exclusive kinds of social relationships that should be parts of the life of every student with significant intellectual disabilities are presented in Table 1. Except for friends, how to develop all of them is well known (Brown, Udvari Solner, Courchane et al., 1994). One way to address this critical standard is to construct a Cumulative Social Relationships Booklet. Assume a child is chronologically 3 and we analyze his social relationship range. Then we consider the social relationship ranges of relevant chronological age peers without disabilities. Then we do all we can to minimize the differences. Each IEP should include a component specific to the development, maintenance and enhancement of a healthy range of at least the 11 social relationships delineated in Table 1. One school day should not pass without a student experiencing at least 3 or 4 of these relationships. It is extremely important that social relationship ranges are inventoried and expanded annually so at exit school they can function effectively with a wide range of individuals with and without disabilities who are and are not family members and who are and are not paid to be with them. During school to

### Table 1. Eleven Kinds of Social Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Eating companion</td>
<td>A peer without disabilities who agrees to function with a peer with disabilities during lunch time. While the student without disabilities may provide assistance, the relationship is primarily for companionship rather than instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - Art, home economics, industrial arts, music, physical education companion</td>
<td>A peer without disabilities who agrees to provide assistance and encouragement to a peer with disabilities in integrated instructional and related activities arranged by relevant professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - Regular class companion</td>
<td>A peer without disabilities who agrees to sit next to, monitor or assist a student with disabilities function acceptably in appropriate regular/general education classroom activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - During school companion</td>
<td>A peer without disabilities who “hangs out” with a student with disabilities during free times at school. The purpose of the relationship is social and it may be manifested at many places and times throughout the school week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - Friend</td>
<td>A reciprocal, mutual, nurturing and sharing relationship between a student with and a peer without disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - Extracurricular companion</td>
<td>A peer without disabilities who guides, assists, monitors and attempts to ensure that everything goes well for a student with disabilities during school sponsored extracurricular activities both during and after school days and times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - After school project companion</td>
<td>A student without disabilities who interacts with a peer with disabilities in the process of completing projects initiated at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - After school companion</td>
<td>A peer without disabilities who “hangs out,” plays with or attends an activity with a student with disabilities during nonschool days and times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - Travel companion</td>
<td>A peer without disabilities agrees to help, guide, monitor or just be with a peer with disabilities as she/he walks, wheels or otherwise travels to and from school and related environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - Neighbor</td>
<td>A nonpaid person without disabilities who interacts with a student with disabilities constructively in nonschool environments and activities during nonschool days and times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - Peer tutor</td>
<td>An instructional relationship between a student who is and one who is not disabled. The primary purpose of the relationship is for the student without disabilities to teach something that has been approved by an adult in authority.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
post school transition years social relationships can and must be developed with persons the students should and will interact with at school exit. Coworkers, service providers, recreation/leisure companions and faith community members are examples.

**Standard # 5. Utilize a Large Repertoire of Functional Skills**

If a person with a disability can or should perform an action but does not and someone else must, it is referred to here as a functional skill. If a person with a disability can or should perform and action but does not and no one else must, it is considered other than a functional skill. For example, a student must be dressed for school. If he does not dress himself and no one else must do so, dressing himself for school is not a functional skill. If someone else must dress him if he does not, dressing himself for school meets the criterion of a functional skill. An important part of becoming the most that you can be is learning to do as much as possible for yourself. The more you do for yourself, the more privacy you have, the less dependent you are and the fewer financial, emotional and other pressures you place upon others (Brown, 2009). Again, when children are born we are obliged to do all we can to insure they survive and thrive. As they get older we are obliged to teach or require them to do more and more for themselves. Most parents do this naturally and without much difficulty. Because most children want to learn to do things for themselves, the significance of such growth and development is generally underappreciated. Indeed, few parents of children without disabilities keep empirical records of the expanding arrays of functional skills their children learn each year. Parents of children with significant intellectual disabilities and others involved in their lives can afford no such luxury. One way to address this important standard is to construct a *Cumulative Functional Skills Booklet*. Assume a child is chronologically 3 and we analyze and make written and video records of the functional skills in her repertoire. Then we consider anything that we are doing for her that she could learn to or should do for herself. Then we teach or otherwise arrange for her to perform specific functional skills. When she learns and practices them appropriately, we select others. It is extremely important that her functional skill repertoire is inventoried, practiced and expanded annually so that when she exits school she can do as much as possible for herself in a wide variety of integrated and respected environments and activities. If we increase the number of environments in which a student operates, we never run out of meaningful functional skills to develop. Conversely, if we confine the number of environments in which a student functions, we quickly run out of functional skills to develop.

**Standard # 6. Utilize a Reasonable Array of Integrated Travel Skills**

When the students of concern exit school they should be able to walk, wheel or otherwise travel about their communities on public busses and trains, in car pools and in taxi cabs by themselves and with individuals who are and are not disabled to and from a wide variety of integrated vocational, recreation/leisure and general community settings. If they are not taught to meet this extremely important integrated travel standard during school years, chances are great they will not be taught to meet it later. Unfortunately, if they are dependent upon specialized transportation services in post school years, the work, recreation/leisure and other general community environments and activities they experience will be unnecessarily constricted.

**Standard # 7. Produce Real Work in Integrated Settings**

In 1975 most parents of children with significant intellectual disabilities were happy to have a school their child could attend. When their children exited school, they were happy to have access to a segregated workshop or activity center. However, each year new children and their parents entered the educational system. Increasing numbers wanted educational standards and practices that focused upon integrated schooling with real work in the real world as a post school outcome. Specifically, in some communities authentic vocational assessment and instruction were provided by school personnel during school days and times. Individualized school to integrated post school work transition plans were designed and implemented. Agencies that provided the necessary long term extra supports were established and the integrated work movement emerged. Can the integrated work standard be realized? Yes. How can we realize such outcomes? If individuals with significant intellectual disabilities are to be prepared to perform real work in the real world, they must be taken to the actual settings in which they are being prepared to function by school personnel during and after school days and times and then taught to function in accordance with the minimally acceptable standards of employers. One way to address this critical educational standard is to construct a *Cumulative Vocational Skills Booklet*. When a student enters high school, each IEP should include a component specific to the development,
maintenance and enhancement of a healthy range of authentic vocational and related skills. It is extremely important that these skills be inventoried, practiced and expanded annually so that they culminate in functioning effectively in the actual integrated and related work places in which the students will function when they exit school. Three of the many components of a Cumulative Vocational Skills Booklet are addressed below.

First, when many employers imagine the vocational capabilities of the students or hear of the depressing adjectives too often ascribed them; they have difficulty conceptualizing how such persons can contribute to the successes of their businesses. To neutralize or attenuate such negative influences, each student should have at least 10 different integrated vocational training experiences before exiting school. One integrated work training experience for one half day per week should be provided each semester for the first 4 years of high school. Additional integrated work experiences should be arranged during summers. As time passes, integrated experiences on the campuses of schools should be systematically reduced and integrated experiences that are the most preferred and appropriate at school exit should be provided. If students remain enrolled in school after their chronological age peers graduate, virtually all of their instruction should be provided in the integrated and related environments and activities in which they will or will likely function at school exit. In each vocational training setting video records of acquisition and performance should be made. These video records across time, settings and work tasks are excellent empirical verifications of competence and can be used as powerful reasons for subsequent employers to allow access to their businesses. Second, they cannot successfully perform all the real work and related tasks required of persons without disabilities. However, they can successfully perform some of the work and related tasks of any worker without disabilities. By performing those tasks, workers without disabilities are released to concentrate on those that are more complicated and valuable. Thus, at the end of each vocational training experience the testimonials of employers and coworkers about the performance of the students should be recorded visually and in print. These testimonials should address factors that are important to employers. Manifesting a reasonable work ethic, reliability, meeting at least minimally acceptable performance standards, noninterference with the productivity or enjoyment of coworkers and completing relatively simple tasks that release coworkers to perform those that are more complex and economically valuable are examples. These testimonials are extremely helpful because most employers place more value on the experiences of other employers than on the endorsements of advocates. Third, it is extremely rare that the students can succeed at a work place without the aid of individualized adaptations that allow at least meaningful partial participation (Ferguson and Baumgart, 1991). Some adaptations can be used to accommodate for physical limitations. Using head or mouth pointers to enter data into a computer, systematically rotating across time limited body positions so as to allow longer work periods without pain or muscle contractions and electronic voice communication devices are examples. Other adaptations can be used to accommodate to intellectual limitations. Picture sequences that can be used to make salads at a fast food restaurant, to deliver urine specimens to a laboratory from an outpatient clinic at a hospital or to secure and distribute supplies from the supply room to clerical workers in a large office are examples. The actual adaptations made at each worksite must be visually or otherwise documented and accumulated. Continually creating and using individualized adaptations will maximize vocational achievement.

**Standard # 8. Manifest Integrated Break and Lunch Time Skills**

Assume the instruction a student has received has prepared her/him to function in a real work setting at school exit and that he/she will function therein indefinitely. Each day at work she/he is allowed two 15 minute breaks and 30 minutes for lunch. One hour per day for five days per week for 50 weeks per year totals 250 hours per year. During this time she/he cannot or does not want to read or compute. She/he does not like and does not understand complex conversations. He/she does not smoke. What can she/he do that is appropriate at his/her work place 250 hours per year? Indeed, many individuals with significant intellectual disabilities do not experience difficulties when actually working, but do so during break and lunch times. Thus, we must teach them to engage in a healthy, meaningful, subjectively enjoyable array of individually and situationally appropriate recreation/leisure activities during their school careers. In contrast, we must teach them to refrain from negatively affecting the lunch and break time experiences of others. Taking a nap or a walk, watching television and listening to favored music through ear phones are possibilities. What will be tolerated, unobtrusive, permissible, practical and possible can only be determined in the process of moving from school to specific post school work settings.
Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities

Standard #9. Function In A Supported Apartment

For the first time in history large numbers of individuals with significant disabilities are outliving their parents. None are capable of surviving or thriving without the direct and sustained assistance of fellow citizens without disabilities. Where do they live when their parents die? The option of placing them in large public or private residential institutions is essentially gone. They are too expensive, too dangerous and too restrictive of human dignity, achievement and enhancement. Extremely few families are financially able to arrange for one of their members with significant intellectual disabilities to own a single family home. Group homes and nursing homes are rejected as too costly, too repressive and restrictive and too disallowing of decent lives. Siblings or other family members will always assume the responsibility for some, but the overwhelming majority will become the responsibility of taxpayers. If taxpayers are responsible for paying for 21 years of schooling and then for many other services until death, it is in their self interest to insure that the individuals of concern cost as little as is reasonable to lead decent lives (Brown and Knollman, 2011). One way to address this standard is to construct and maintain a Cumulative Residential Skills Booklet. The skills a person should and could have in her/his repertoire at school exit in order to survive and thrive in a supported apartment could be delineated. Then at an early age we can start teaching specific skills on the list. By the time the student exits school she/he is performing as much as possible by and for her/himself. Those skills that she/he cannot perform can then be performed by persons who are paid to live with him/her and with no more than one other individual with disabilities or by someone who comes to the apartment periodically and provides the needed extra support. Apartments are the best options because of the balance between the costs of the extra support needed and the quality of life they allow.

What We Can Do To Continue To Produce Horrible School Outcomes?

We are really good at producing individuals who can only function in segregated settings and activities, who comprehensively underachieve and who otherwise live terribly restricted lives at great taxpayer and family expense. If we choose to continue to produce such individuals, we can continue to engage in at least the following practices.

- Confine them to segregated schools, classrooms and classes. This will disprepare them to function in integrated settings and activities. No one can argue that functioning in segregated schools, classrooms and classes is a good way to prepare for effective functioning in integrated society.

- Deny or ignore the horrible post school outcomes you have been producing for years and continue to confine them to general education classrooms in symbiotic relationships with paraprofessionals.

- Continue to teach to their normal human development levels and disregard chronological age appropriateness.

- Make sure that their unique learning and performance characteristics are not determined or not honored.

- Make sure that the curricular content they are exposed to is abstract, symbolic, complex, highly verbal and precollege in nature and clearly above their difficulty ranges.

- Reject the creation and use of individualized adaptations and meaningful partial participation.

- Confine instruction to school grounds. This will ensure that they cannot function safely and efficiently in real streets, busses, work places, stores, parks, theatres, etc.

- Make sure they are assigned untrained teachers with emergency, probationary or temporary licenses. Keep thinking they cannot learn very much so they do not need highly trained teachers and therapists.

- Keep parents out of or minimize their involvement in school policies, decisions and operations.

- Resist all changes and pressures from “outside.” Function from the premise that you are the school professionals with experience. You and only you should decide what and how services are provided.

- Never conduct post school follow up studies of your graduates. This will allow you to continue what you are doing without learning what was wasteful and harmful or helpful and productive.

- Reject or otherwise disregard the values, dreams and testimonials of “advocates” and other integration agitators. Keep believing that the students who are experiencing success in integrated settings and activities those people are talking about are not as disabled as those for whom you are responsible.
Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities

What We Can Do To Produce Better And Integrated School Outcomes?

Each day evidence that integrated post school outcomes are achievable accumulates. If we choose to prepare more individuals with significant intellectual disabilities to live, work and play in integrated society at school exit, we can engage in at least the following practices.

- Arrange for them to function in the same schools, classrooms and classes they would if not disabled. This will provide them and millions of others without disabilities with the experiences necessary to learn to function effectively together.

- Provide authentic assessment and instruction starting in integrated early childhood settings and activities. Increase and expand these practices throughout school careers. Just as segregated schools, classrooms and classes and confining instruction to the physical property of schools beget segregated post school lives, integrated schools, classrooms and classes and authentic assessment and instruction beget integrated post school lives.

- Increase the number of environments in which they are taught to function successfully each year. When they exit school, they should be functioning in basically the same array of environments as local chronological age peers without disabilities.

- Gradually increase the social relationship ranges operative each year. When they exit school, they should have basically the same array of social relationships as chronological age peers without disabilities.

- Gradually increase the functional skill repertoires operative each year. When they exit school, they should be doing as much as they possibly can for themselves.

- Prepare them to produce real work in integrated work settings.

- Conduct annual post school follow up studies of your graduates. This will allow you to determine what you taught that was needed and helpful and what you taught that was not. Then you can then adapt your instructional program to the evolving needs of your students.

We know what to do. We know how to do it. Let’s make it happen.

References


The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments (IDEA) of 1997, PL 105 - 17, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400etseq.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004, PL 108 - 446. 20 U.S.C §§ 1400 et seq.


"Plastics!" This iconic line from a neighbor was told to a young Dustin Hoffman 45 years ago during The Graduate. Recently graduated from college, Hoffman pondered his likely school exit outcomes, looking for direction in his future (post-school) residential, community, and vocational endeavors. Blessed with impressive intellectual capability, he nonetheless floated through time (and the pool scene) while he considered which, if any, of the usual post-school routines he would pursue. Plastics, he was told, would become the wave of the future, the key to employability, and the path to successful personal finance. A post-school future centered on plastics would hold options, career growth, security, independence, and more. Who needs futures planning advocates, ecological inventories, and individualized planning when the path ahead was paved in plastics?

Futures planning should be so easy for people with severe disabilities. For 1-2% of the population with the lowest intellectual functioning, meaningful educational planning has taxed the thinking of families and professionals since the school doors were first ordered open. As a field we’ve seen the best and the worst from professionals responsible for educating these students. Historically, some professionals argued against any effort to even teach this population, using courts and professional writings to create a disparaging folklore that these individuals were not even educable (see Scheerenberger, 1983). Other professionals took a different tack, interspersing research, advocacy, and legal challenges to demonstrate the robust gains that could be made when superior teaching was provided in typical, everyday life routines.

School Reforms, Educational Standards, and their Impact

In many ways the challenge to make education meaningful for students with severe disabilities parallels that of students who do not have disabilities. Public opinion is frequently loud, determined, and contradictory on prescriptions for better schools. Each year, public opinions are surveyed to establish Americans’ concerns regarding the health and direction of our schools (see Bushaw & Lopez, 2012). In the years since Mr. Hoffman was advised to pursue plastics, the public has expressed a concern that (a) too much and too little attention is being paid to immigrants in schools; (b) too much and too little support is provided to students who do not speak English as their first language; (c) too much and too little support is provided to students who struggle to learn; and (d) too much and too little funding is spent on local schools. And although their concern over the future of schools is high, most Americans are quite grateful for teachers’ efforts.

And then, there are standards. “Standards” has become the rallying cry that “Plastics” was in an earlier era. In 1983 the U.S. Department of Education published, A Nation at Risk, which...
sounded an alarm in every state (NCEE, 1983). The U.S. was losing a war of economic competition – not to our historical enemies, but to our long time friends and allies. We were losing this war because our best and brightest students could no longer compete with students in other nations in the sciences and math. At risk were the health of the American economy, and the exportability of American values and influence around the globe. Nothing short of deep school reforms that linked curriculum to national standards would turn around this threat. Age old mistrust of federal involvement in local schools evaporated as national curriculum standards were implemented, followed by statewide student assessments, where student test results determined future financial rewards and punishers for states and local schools. Americans and others in general have supported the move toward common curriculum standards, although there is growing skepticism about the accountability and assessment systems associated with this movement (Bushaw & Lopez, 2012).

Like most school reforms, the standards movement has taken place with little forethought about the potential impact on students and families who are not destined to be the captains of American industry, the future Nobel prize winners, or the next generation of technology gurus. But the impact of this movement has been great on many populations of students, and the movement continues to evolve. For many students with disabilities, the standards movement helped to open the door to general education curriculum content. This access, combined with efforts to provide supports to students within general education classes, has made going to a regular school a much more inclusive educational experience for many students. Given the historical trend to exclude students with significant disabilities from progressive educational reforms, this has been a positive development for many students (Polloway, Smith, Patton & Smith, 1996). For students with the most severe disabilities, however, the attention to the academic general education curriculum has meant a loss of opportunity for individualized, more functional learning outcomes. Increased attention to a rigorous academic curriculum necessarily results in decreased attention to an individualized functional curriculum. And as many students (and their families) who struggle with the relevance of a college preparation curriculum have learned, increased academic curriculum standards results in increased graduation requirements, an outcome that has hit students with severe disabilities hard.

Another impact of the standards movement involves statewide student assessments. States are required to demonstrate that students with severe disabilities are included in statewide assessments. Because many states now base future financial rewards and punishers for schools on their students’ test results, local school leaders spend inordinate resources and good will on determining which students can reasonably be excluded from assessments, and under what conditions. Principals in low achieving, high need schools already are at risk of losing funding, may consider students with severe disabilities (and the energy needed to deliver quality programs to them) as just another unreasonable risk factor. Given the potential cost, and the high energy effort of creative, individualized, and high quality programming, it has become far too easy for some principals to avoid or minimize serious educational programming for the students most in need of this planning and attention.

**What Standards for These Students Should Apply?**

In his article, Brown (in this issue) notes that the quest to impose the current milieu of educational standards is “myopic, longitudinal and inflexible.” Far from arguing against the imposition of standards, however, Brown argues that the standards adopted during the current reform movement are simply the wrong ones to use when designing and delivering educational programs for students with severe disabilities. Perhaps more than any other professional in the field, Brown is responsible for leading the effort to help establish exactly what our decision heuristics should be when planning educational programs for these individuals. In chapters, articles, presentations, and testimony with students, colleagues, and alone, Brown has continually challenged the field to think through the implications of selecting one criterion over another when deciding how much instructional time and energy professionals should devote to teaching one task versus another. From his initial criterion of ultimate functioning (Brown, Nietupski, & Hamre-Nietupski, 1976), through myriad other criteria during the ensuing 37 years, Brown and his colleagues have proposed at least a dozen such benchmarks that far surpass the academic standards promulgated since *A Nation at Risk*. The standards proposed by Brown et al. are not designed to assure that students with severe disabilities gain employment in our space stations, capture market share in emerging bond funds, create synergy with international fellows on medical patents, or discover energy sources that will replace fossil fuels. Brown’s standards are more humble, perhaps even more mundane; and they are infinitely more rational and helpful when establishing what is worth teaching to students who have the most need for precision and support during instruction.
Brown’s (in this issue) standards are clear, and have immediate implications for the students, the professionals who educate them, and their families. Point by point, Brown urges us to:

- Avoid wasting time teaching skills that will not help these students in their current and future lives;
- Hold educators responsible for designing and delivering truly meaningful programs;
- Deliver students’ educational programs in a variety of normal environments, and assess the progress being made;
- Teach students to interact well with others and expend a good work ethic;
- Teach meaningful academics that are likely to be needed to function in post-school environments;
- Teach students to function in a variety of post-school places with chronologically aged peers;
- Teach the social skills needed to interact with others in a typical array of relationships;
- Expand students’ repertoires of functional skills by teaching these skills;
- Teach students to be mobile in typical community settings;
- Arrange a wide variety of normal work opportunities during the school years, and teach students to participate in these skills and settings;
- Teach students to participate in healthy and meaningful activities when they are not engaged in work tasks; and
- Teach students to function in supported living settings.

These standards are not remarkable, but they are sound. It is not above the capacity of educators to design instruction for these standards, or to deliver lessons that will help students learn them. It is not pushing the limits of work tolerance for educators to assess whether the students are acquiring skills during these lessons, becoming fluent in the use of the skills, and generalizing the lesson outcomes. But, the absence of instruction that meets these standards will certainly guarantee that most students with severe disabilities will not possess the post-school outcomes needed (a) to live without a host of paid providers to care for their life-long basic needs, and (b) to continue to grow and pursue improved life opportunities as adults. That is, the same school systems who successfully prepared the most intellectually capable students for their futures will have failed to prepare the students most in need of professionals’ efforts and talents for theirs.

**The Paradox of Individualizing Standards**

Is it ironic that a call for meaningful standards begins with a caution that the standards promoted thus far should have an “opt-out” clause? Standards exist as an effort to create a common set of expectations or rules by which everyone must abide. Since *A Nation at Risk*, academic standards have been promoted as the means by which U.S. schools would develop the common curriculum needed to regain its competitive edge in business, the sciences, and math. Indeed the current Common Core State Standards (CCSS) exist as “a clear set of shared goals and expectations” in mathematics and in English language arts. Students are said to need these common skills at each grade level “to ultimately be prepared to graduate college... The standards establish what students need to learn” (NGACBP, 2010).

If these (or next iteration of) common academic standards are needed as the core curriculum for all students for college and career readiness, how do students with severe disabilities fit? Shall we pick and choose standards that might be learned most easily by students with the most serious learning challenges? Do we select a set of CCSS through an arbitrary grade level, then wing it? Perhaps we require full immersion into the CCSS until some criterion number of consecutive years of failure, then remove students from school? Obviously these options are not viable solutions, although similar solutions have been explored. Fortunately there are some very talented professionals who understand how students with severe disabilities learn, and they are making progress creating academic alternatives that are consistent with the CCSS (Browder, Trela, Courtade, Jimenez, Knight, & Flowers, 2012; Hudson, Browder & Wakeman, 2013; Saunders, Bethune, Spooner, & Browder, 2013). But as Brown has pointed out so often, time spent on academics with limited impact robs instructional time spent teaching high impact functional skills. Might a system of rational educational standards for students with severe disabilities incorporate some elements of the CCSS embedded in a broader functional skills curriculum? Certainly core academic standards for a portion of the curriculum for some students is not exactly what CCSS advocates had in mind!

As often happens in systems change efforts, progress is made by looking toward larger, sometimes forgotten principles. The central principle governing the success of special education has been the mandate to individualize. Since the passage of the *Education for
**Articles from our Contributors**

*Plastics, Standards, and the Need to Return to Individualized Planning: A Commentary on “Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities”*

All Handicapped Children Act as federal law in 1975, every aspect of planning and delivering educational programs for students with disabilities has held individualization as a central tenet. Special education has made its most profound impact when that education has, indeed, been special. The formula that made it special has been professionals working with families to make individual decisions. Conversely, the biggest disappointments for many have occurred when differentiation and individualized planning was discarded – when, somehow, all the IEPs ended up looking alike. It is the individualization mandate that allows (a) differentiated modes of instruction, (b) selection of different goals and objectives, (c) different approaches to therapies, and (d) variance in the places and effort allocated for instruction.

The return to individualization should be the driving principle to implementing educational standards for students with severe disabilities. Standards presented by Brown (in this issue) insist on differentiated and individualized planning and delivery of instruction. As educators improve ways to build relevant academic linkages to core academic standards, there will be individual students who will likely benefit from this curriculum. Along with standards that continue to insist on expanding functional life post-school outcomes, individual determinations on CCSS outcomes might enable some students to gain access to future activities that are enjoyable and fulfilling. But, like our biggest successes, that will be established individually, and that creates just a little glitch in the proposition that core academic standards must drive schooling for all students.

**Epilogue**

To return to our character from *The Graduate*, there is a second scene that characterizes the angst and excitement of forces that seem beyond our protagonist’s understanding or control. With emotion that few actors can muster, Dustin Hoffman meekly says, “Mrs. Robinson, you’re trying to seduce me. Aren’t you?” Looking back, one wonders whether this could have been a docudrama episode, held in an expensive hotel convention center, covering the latest negotiating tactics among politicos and professional educators. The logic of implementing standards is indeed seductive! And if only it was that simple. But it isn’t. Nothing in special education has ever been simple. But perhaps returning to the logic of individualization as a strategy for adopting and implementing educational standards will resolve the dilemma of how the 1-2% of students who have the most need for precise instructional programming will help assure that growing numbers of students will not waste the few opportunities they have to benefit from their school years.

**References**


Teaching Algebra to People with Developmental Disabilities: The Practice, Pitfalls, and Promise of Taking Risks in the Classroom

Anthony M. Rodriguez, Providence College

Introduction

Students with developmental disabilities (DD) are not challenged enough in the area of Mathematics, specifically in Algebra. I think as educators we owe it to all students to push limits and extend the supports necessary to teach them Algebra. Many students with and without disabilities are afraid of algebra until they try it. Some students believe that no one in his right mind would agree to learn algebra [the gateway and sometimes gatekeeper to higher mathematics and to college (Chambers, 1994; Moses & Cobb, 2001)] unless he was coerced and definitely not without the coaxing and support of a skilled teacher. Fear of mathematics is real for many individuals, but with methodical instruction and challenging and relevant material, supported in multiple ways, these same individuals can be successful. A challenge, in this case algebra, once taken on and mastered, can open the doors to post-secondary education and future career success. Algebra, as its Arabic name Al-jabr/Algebrista (translated as “the bone setter”) implies is simply the restoration of pieces, detective work with clues, and the solving of mysteries with variables. If a student can add, subtract, multiply, or divide they can do algebra.

Many students with DD are often sheltered and protected from ever having to take risks (Perske, 1972) and are not encouraged to work outside their comfort zone, and are never given the chance to improve. The individual with DD, like every other math student, has the right to freely experience his or her environment, to explore and learn from mistakes inherent in discovery. “We can be aware of consequences only because of previous experiences” (Dewey, 1938, p. 68). There is evidence that students with disabilities can work on their weaknesses without falling prey to the disconnected skills-only deficit model that pervades much of special education today (Browder, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Spooner, Mimms, & Baker, 2009; Katims, 2000; Martinez, 1998; Zucker, 1995).

Successful people learn to overcome the obstacles that hinder achievement of their goals. Educators worry that if a child fails, she will not be able to recover. We must believe in the capacity of each individual to recover from failures, to reconstruct, and to succeed in school. Knowledge can only be earned, we cannot give them anything worth keeping, and regardless of how much we as educators want them to succeed, we must place the full weight of learning on their shoulders. Only through trial and error can these obstacles be overcome. Individuals can overcome deficits and learn skills while they deepen their understanding of mathematics, which will create more options for future careers.
that are dependent on mathematics. Many of our brightest citizens, at top tier colleges embrace the “fail early and often” mantra on the path to discover new things. Could it be that this ethos needs to be employed with students with disabilities in a class with engaging and thoughtful math problems that relate to their lives? After many years of teaching mathematics to students with DD, here are a few tips on how to get the most out of a math class.

**The Keys to Learning Algebra for Adults with DD**

Differentiation of subject matter and integration of the environment around us increases the complexity of our thinking and doing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). We can improve our classrooms with fewer lectures and standardized testing, with more group and independent work (Shernoff et al., 2003) with real problems connected to our communities to increase student engagement. Each lesson must be planned and differentiated to meet students’ needs, through a conceptual math model with skill practice to follow (Hiebert & Carpenter, 2005; Lampert, 1986; Miller & Mercer, 1997). Student engagement is likely increased through relevant math practices (Lave, 1985). In this article, I will describe each component of a great math class and provide examples of how each component works. I will begin with the structural emphasis of math models in instruction and how to create the best ones for your students. Then I will describe the importance of conceptual understanding in problem solving. Finally, I will describe how to best use small groups, peer models and direct instruction.

I developed these tips through a great deal of trial and error, success and failure, to improve my students understanding of algebra. I encourage any math teacher to experiment, fall on their face in front of their class, restructure and teach better and through this iterative process become a better, more effective best math teacher.

**The Math Model**

From the moment class begins a teacher must employ a math model. The math model is a concrete object (box, sphere, line, tied string), which is later drawn on the board as a representation of the concrete model. It is used to ground the problem, make it real for the students, and give them motivation to find the answer. For example, I taught my class the concept of change using two- and three-dimensional objects (dilation) through architecture. I showed them a box, told them it was a floor plan of a new house and that the owners were unhappy with the design of a few rooms. Certain rooms needed to expand (the walk in closet) and some needed to shrink (the man cave) based on the couples’ discussions. I described the object and proposed this problem to be solved in math terms to the class. I then ask probing questions about how we could do this and later calculate this in square and cubic feet.

The class had to engage in a running dialogue on the different ways to shrink and enlarge rooms, which I used to check for understanding to spark conversation for the first 10 -20 minutes of each class. This exercise could be as simple as a pair of shoelaces representing the tying and untying of algebra (composing and decomposing of numbers) or like our example, a couple discussing new plans for their house. We explore it, take our time, then consider how we might find the actual volume or surface area and then discuss. The key to this component is engaging the class in a high match discussion.

Later we can apply the skill, or procedure using a math equation to solve a host of different real word problems. If you give away the math skill too early, the student will not listen to the concepts – they will just want to quickly solve the problem. The concepts, or math ideas and themes, tie meaning to the procedures which increases recall. The key when using a math model is that each model must: a) have relevance to the students everyday experience or math ideas and themes, tie meaning to the procedures which increases recall. The key when using a math model is that each model must: a) have relevance to the students everyday experience and b) have a math problem to solve that is slightly beyond the skills of each student, and c) teach concepts first skills to follow.

**Conceptual Understanding and the Front Loading of a Lesson: Providing the Back Story**

As found in many reform based math practices (Hiebert & Carpenter, 2005; Hiebert, Carpenter, Fennema, Fuson, Uman, Murray, Oliver, & Wearne., 1996; Fuson, Wearne, Hiebert, Murray, Human, Oliver, Carpenter, & Fennema 1997), algebraic concepts are the core ideas and attributes that unify every math class. It is the back story, providing useful clues in understanding the whys, how, and for what reason we learn math. In comic books for example, the back-story explains the hero’s prior experiences and why he behaves the way he does and provides the keys to understanding the future choices he makes to the reader. Comic book fans know that Batman’s sense of justice as well as his attachment issues derives from the tragic loss of his parents at such a young age. Similarly, the back story of a math problem can give the student the conceptual structures necessary for understanding how to proceed in solving a problem. Conceptual
Understanding is a major goal and crucial to supporting effective mathematics education.

A student with strong conceptual understanding will see the multiple ways you can solve an applied problem, for they are not tied to one algorithm. They see the many components of a math sentence and can adjust their methods to restore the whole. For example, in football, a quarterback with great conceptual understanding of the game knows the many ways to score against a given defense, calls a play anticipating a certain alignment, studies the way the defense is configured, then in a split second changes to a better play, resulting in the optimal call for that particular challenge. Similarly, math problem solvers with great conceptual understanding, see the components necessary to solve a given problem, adjust, and then choose the best one. Skills, although important, must be taught after concepts, because the use of skills in the absence of a plan can lead to confusion.

In my class, I front load each lesson with conceptual understanding and spend the first part of each class slowly discussing the concepts and applications behind the math skills or procedures. I want the students to develop the ability to see the components, “to see the whole field”. This exercise in thorough understanding, prior to skill practice is aligned with “Slow Knowing” (Claxton, 1997). The idea here is that when learning something deeply and slowly one is rewarded with higher skills and better foundational math understandings as opposed to a student who rushes through the work. Every lesson must connect to a real problem, as many students often ask is “When are we going to really use this anyway?” When students know that they are going to use it later, they generally pay more attention and become involved in the lesson. When they have a clear understanding of concepts they will be able to participate later in class.

**Small Groups and Pairs**

After the front-loading of concepts has sufficiently been modeled and you have checked for understanding in the large group, it is time to split the whole group into pairs to work on math problem solving. I have four large chalk boards attached to the four walls of my room and I built two diamond shaped, moveable, dry erase boards out of old wire encased windows I found next to a building remodeling site, so my students can: a) work with their partner away from others, b) talk about the math with their partner, and c) civilly argue about the math problem amongst themselves.

Argument in problem solving is a way of engaging the small group or pair in learning and deepening their understanding of math. Having the boards spread out in all directions of my classroom allows me to watch how they solve problems, which gives me an opportunity to quickly assess where each team is succeeding or struggling, and I can either step in and help or stay away and let them struggle with the problem at hand. Struggling to problem solve can be healthy and actually raise the level of complex thinking and cultivate a sense of ownership. Later, when they solve the problem they feel pride in doing it themselves. A note of caution is in order, as a teacher, learning when to intervene and when to sit and watch; perhaps cheer the individual on from afar is a continuous adjustment process. Too often teachers do the heavy lifting for students when learning concepts and skills slightly outside of their skill level which may hinder rather than help learning.

**Peer Models With and Without Developmental Disabilities**

I have taught algebra in several different environments, to both grade school children and adults. The most important element in successful algebra teaching and learning is the peer model. I am exacting in the characteristics and selection of a peer model. They must be patient yet firm, tough even. Models should encourage students to take on most of the work and help out only when needed. They must resist the temptation to give away answers to “keep up” with the rest of the class. I would much rather have a peer model work through a single applied math problem with a struggling learner during this time correctly rather than rush through 1, just to stay with the rest of the group. The quality within successful problem solving is the beginning of quality performance in mathematics.

Many teachers contend that the peer model must be the one without a disability. I have found that level of disability does not correlate with aptitude as a peer model. Conversely, I have found that in some cases a peer model with similar learning needs as the individual struggling has shown to be preferable (Rodriguez, 2012). The peer model with a similar disability may be challenged with the same types of problems and through trial and error unlocks the potential within. They are in a unique position to help another unlock theirs. This can be the case in inclusive classrooms where it is common to pair up the one with a disability and the one without. If the selection of peer models in your classroom is not dependent on the special ed./general ed. student pairing, it can create an atmosphere that is truly inclusive.
demonstrating that anyone at any time can be the peer model, and we are all capable of doing many things.

**Direct instruction**

Direct instruction is a necessary component of any mathematics program for people with DD. It can provide ground level support when everything is not working in class, when the plane fails to take off and we must intervene. I use 1:1, direct instruction generally when a student does not do well in the beginning of class when I front-load the concepts taught for the day/week. There are some cues that help me determine, when I need to employ direct instruction. For example, when a student completely gives up and looks at me in full-blown math panic mode. At this point I cannot afford to let her struggle alone or with the best peer model. I must step in and teach exactly what she needs to know to continue working, just enough in 1:1 direct instruction mode to get her back in the lesson and then I can walk away to let her work. The faster I am in and out of direct instruction the better. Please be careful in this mode, due to the implications that a student may see this as the only way to solve problems and that the teacher is responsible for the student learning, now and in future classes. Direct instruction implemented too often is not unlike a parent teaching their kid how to drive by taking the driver’s seat away from them, relegating them to a passenger in their own vehicle, passively watching the world go by.

**Concerns in a math classroom and their solutions**

**Real problems in the math program and my solution: A call for change**

Many of the lessons in Algebra that I teach people with DD revolve around an immediately interesting subject: money. I teach a study skills math class called Math Strategies, that pairs with the other math classes (Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II, Pre-Calculus) at an urban high school in the southwestern United States. ‘The districts’ intent was to reinforce the math skills each student learns in the core math class, hopefully improving their skills and eventually their grades in that core class. Unfortunately, the class was primarily used for a) homework completion and b) drilling math skills with no connections to a real math model resulting in disinterest, off task behavior, and with no improvement in skills or grades. Still in widespread practice, as seen in Zucker (1995), many students with developmental disabilities are taught basic skills only without context or purpose, resulting in neither higher skills nor preparation for post secondary training. This observation lead me to create a math strategies class that relates to real world math and avoids the motivation loss found in disconnected study skills that receives most of the attention in math classes.

**The best math model: The real life application.** In my Math strategies class we physically build math models that we later use to solve in the formal math course. The math model we use the most is our business ‘The Cibola High School Greenhouse and Composting Company where we: a) recycle local organic waste to make compost which we sell and use the remainder in the raised beds we build; b) trade the vegetables at a local pizzeria in exchange for pizzas every 6 weeks and; c) grow plants in the greenhouse from seed for our annual plant sale. This multi dimensional math model teaches my students core Algebra, Geometry, and Algebra II concepts. For example, when potting plants in quart pots they intimately get to know what a quart looks like, what in weighs in the hand and how much money we earn when selling the pots. They also must understand costs for selling plants and potential profits of both our compost and plant sales. Many programs run community based programs like mine, yet none of them take advantage of the academic standards I emphasize in my program.

**Conclusion**

Regardless of an individuals’ disability level, every student can learn math at higher levels, in my case algebra, with these strategies that I have learned through constant failure. A teacher can use the basic structure I advocate for in this article to write their own unique lessons to promote effective math instruction for all students. The best teachers are risk takers who do not rely on a single program or method to teach algebra (or any canned program for that matter) and invent their own lessons tailored to their students needs. They own their teaching, take pride in their curriculum, and as a result teach better and enjoy the work. I hark back to the research of Jo Boaler (1998), who demonstrated that a math program aligned with reform based ideas, as this article speaks to, has among many things, even improved scores on standardized tests. Importantly progress on standardized tests for my students is only the cherry on the sundae. Most importantly joy in teaching and engaged students learning real life math should always be the main focus of any educational endeavor. Fear of failure is a barrier that must be overcome in order to tap into the student’s true potential. Try to be comfortable enough to fail early and often in a math classroom, for it is our best teacher.
# Articles from our Contributors

## Teaching Algebra to People with Developmental Disabilities: The Practice, Pitfalls, and Promise of Taking Risks in the Classroom

### Appendix A: The Breakdown of my two paired classes (Use as ratios if your class is not 60 minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Math Class</th>
<th>Math Strategies Class (Greenhouse)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math model with the front loading of concepts (20 minutes)</td>
<td>(On chalkboard is a Monday through Friday list of jobs and teams attached to each job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group practice – discussion, solving math problems, teaching others (20 minutes)</td>
<td>Front loading of expectations, things to watch out for and final products I am expecting (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual practice (20 minutes)</td>
<td>Break into groups with peer model leader; work on project (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework (20 minutes max)</td>
<td>Work check and feedback from teacher (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References


### Contact Information

Anthony M. Rodriguez  
Assistant Professor, Elementary and Special Education  
Providence College, 320 Harkins Hall, 1 Cunningham Square, North Providence, RI 02918
Education Equity Matters

Education Equity Matters is a one-day TASH regional conference with a specific focus on evidence-based practices in educating students with significant disabilities in inclusive classrooms and school communities.

Participants of this conference will learn the philosophy and values that guide successful practice and quality instruction, and understand the critical role of education leaders in education equity. We will examine proven strategies to building partnerships that consider all stakeholders, including students, educators, parents, school personnel and the surrounding community. Presenters will also highlight opportunities to affect change within schools and communities.

Education Equity Matter
August 1, 2014
St. Louis, Missouri

Co-hosted by Missouri TASH

http://tash.org/eematters

Promoting Self-Determined Futures

Promoting Self Determined Futures is a one-day TASH regional conference. Its focus is on evidence-based practices in facilitating and supporting self direction as a tool for improved transition processes and results for youth with significant disabilities.

Participants of this conference will learn the philosophy and values that guide practice; successful transition self-directed planning; employment experiences during high school and post secondary options that lead to employment; and roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder (parent, student, teacher, vocational rehabilitation counselor, and adult services) along the way.

Promoting Self-Determined Futures
September 10, 2014
Atlanta, Georgia

Co-hosted by Southest TACE Region IV, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities and Georgia State University Center for Leadership in Disability

http://tash.org/PSDF
Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities: A Response to Lou Brown

John McDonnell, PhD, University of Utah
Pam Hunt, PhD, San Francisco State University
Lewis Jackson, PhD, University of Northern Colorado
Diane Ryndak, PhD, University of Florida

In Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities, Lou Brown argues that the current federal mandates requiring this group of students to be involved and progress in the general education curriculum and to take alternate assessments has had a negative impact on the quality and effectiveness of their educational programs. He goes on to argue that a curriculum that is driven by nine broad standards linked to functional outcomes for students would allow LEAs and SEAs to provide a more meaningful educational experience for students and would increase the likelihood of enhancing the quality-of-life of students after they leave school.

Brown and his colleagues (Brown, Neitupski, & Hamre-Neitupski, 1976; Brown et al., 1979) championed the development of person-centered ecological curricular frameworks in the 1970s so it is not surprising that his critique would advocate for a return to a structure based on this approach. Brown’s initial call for the adoption of this framework was based on the ineffectiveness of developmental and pre-academic curriculum models to produce meaningful post-school outcomes for students with significant intellectual disabilities. He and his colleagues argued that educational programs should focus on increasing students’ ability to function successfully in home, school, and community settings. In order to achieve this, instruction needed to be moved out of the school and into the settings that students would be expected to use week in and week out. Subsequent research on the ecological approach to curriculum development strongly supported Brown’s position and showed that not only could students learn to complete complex personal management, leisure, and employment activities, but that the post-school outcomes for students who received regular and systematic instruction in community settings were superior to those who had not (McDonnell, 2010).

Given this, it is not surprising Brown cautions that the movement toward the use of grade-level standards as the primary source for selecting goals and objectives for students with significant intellectual disabilities opens the door for a return to “developmentalism” and an abandonment of proven strategies that produce tangible improvements in the quality of life of many students. While we understand his concerns and agree with some of his recommendations, we argue that both the general education curriculum and ecological curriculum frameworks have something important to offer all students. Instead of presenting these two options as an “either/or” choice, we suggest that an approach that seeks to balance these two approaches is not only possible, but also provides the opportunity to create richer and more meaningful educational programs for students. In the remaining sections of this paper we discuss some of Brown’s observations about grade-level standards and briefly describe a strategy for blending and balancing the general education curriculum and ecological curricular frameworks.
Brown’s Concerns About a Focus on Grade-Level Standards

Brown’s primary concerns with the standards-based reform movement is that it has prompted states to establish rigid grade-level standards that do not reflect instructional content that is relevant to the lives of students with significant intellectual disabilities and to their preparation to assume adult roles in the community. Further, he suggests that these mandates for students with significant intellectual disabilities were mistakenly supported by individuals (e.g., parents, teachers, administrators, policy makers, researchers, and faculty in higher education) who believed that students’ involvement in the general education curriculum would lead to their full inclusion of in general education classes.

He argues that the unintended consequences of this shift from ecological curriculum framework to grade-level standards has included (a) the development of educational programs that are driven by the structure of the curriculum, rather than students’ specific needs and aspirations; (b) a reduction in the amount of direct instruction that students receive in actual performance settings; and (c) the evaluation of school effectiveness in terms of students’ performance on statewide alternate assessments rather than their quality of life during and after school. It is important to note that a number of other researchers have expressed similar concerns about the potential impacts of the mandates to link students’ education programs to grade-level standards and their participation in alternate assessments (Ayres, Douglas, Lowery, & Shievers, 2011; Lowery, Drasgow, Renzaglia, & Chezan, 2007; Ryndak, Alper, Hughes, & McDonnell, 2012).

Brown makes two primary recommendations to address these concerns. First, he suggests that grade-level standards should be abandoned, and that LEAs and SEAs should adopt nine functional standards for students with severe intellectual disabilities that are focused on meaningful post-school outcomes. He argues that these functional standards would be more effective in increasing the capacity of students with significant intellectual disabilities to develop social relationships, use community environments, work in inclusive jobs, and live in supported apartments. He maintains that these functional standards would be compatible with the use of a person-centered planning process to determine goals and objectives for the IEPs of students with significant intellectual disabilities. Finally, he contends that these functional standards would (a) encourage teachers to provide instruction in the environments in which skills are needed, (b) expand the number of environments in which students successfully navigate, and (c) increase the quality and complexity of students’ performance in school, at home, and in community settings across time.

Second, Brown argues for the use of authentic assessment of students’ performance in home, school, and community settings as the measure of school effectiveness instead of alternate assessments linked to grade-level standards. He maintains that the use of authentic assessment would hold IEP teams and administrators accountable for preparing students with significant intellectual disabilities to “…live, work and play as cost efficiently as possible in a wide array of integrated environments and activities at school exit” (p. 14).

Brown raises a number of valid issues, and we agree in principle with many of his recommendations for improving the quality of students’ educational programs. However, we do not agree with his central proposition that grade-level standards should be abandoned and replaced by functional standards for students with significant intellectual disabilities. Our concern is that this could reinforce the perception that students with significant intellectual disabilities cannot benefit from instruction on grade-level standards and implicitly validate parallel systems of education for this group of students. Instead, we argue that much of what Brown advocates for can be achieved through an approach that incorporates grade-level standards more effectively into a person-centered ecological curricular framework.

Where Do We Go From Here?

In contrast to Brown’s critique, we suggest that the requirement that all students with disabilities be involved and progress in the general education curriculum has forced a re-examination of collective assumptions about the capacity of students with severe intellectual disabilities to learn complex academic skills, the purpose of education, and how we judge school effectiveness. Unfortunately, as is reflected in Brown’s paper, these discussions are often cast as a choice between developing a program that addresses the general education curriculum and one that takes a person-centered approach. We believe that the best way forward is to reconcile an ecological curricular framework focusing on quality of life outcomes with the underlying intent of high academic expectations and accountability for students with significant intellectual disabilities that are embedded within grade-level standards. This can be accomplished by selecting content for students’ educational programs based on an expanded person-centered planning process, providing instruction that is designed specifically to promote the application of skills in activities throughout the day and the generalization of skills to
Articles from our Contributors

**Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities: A Response to Lou Brown**

We agree with Brown that valued educational outcomes for students with significant intellectual disabilities include participating as independently as possible in an array of environments, engaging in meaningful work, developing a social network and close social relationships, and supported living. However, we also believe that quality of life is not only about becoming a good friend, employee, and neighbor; it is also about developing knowledge and skills that increase an individuals’ understanding of the physical, historical, and social/political world; their knowledge of culture and citizenship; and their capacity to become life-long learners. This broadened understanding of valued educational outcomes for students with significant intellectual disabilities offers a richer view of education and honors the importance of shared understandings and experiences in supporting students’ full membership in the community.

**Instruction to Promote Application and Generalization**

We agree with Brown that instruction must be designed to promote the application and generalization of knowledge and skills to actual activities and settings. Studies have shown that students can be taught a wide variety of academic skills selected from the general education curriculum and that they do generalize these skills to other stimulus materials, tasks, and settings in the school (Bradford, Shippen, Alberto, Houchins, & Flores, 2006; Jimenez, Courtade, & Browder, 2008; McDonnell et al., 2006; Neef, Nelles, Iwata, & Page, 2003). While there is a lack of research that has explicitly examined the generalization of knowledge and skills drawn from state grade-level standards from school to home and community environments, there are a number of studies that demonstrate that students can generalize skills learned in school to actual performance settings when instruction is carefully designed (McDonnell, 2011).

This body of research suggests that the likelihood that students will use academic knowledge and skills to meet high priority life goals is enhanced if they receive instruction that is designed to (a) teach skills in multiple ways during the school day; (b) incorporate authentic tasks into school-based instruction that reflect the actual performance demands of typical settings; (c) incorporate student-directed activities into instruction; (d) embed academic skills into the instruction of functional routines and activities across home, school, and community settings as they occur naturally throughout the day; and (e) provide community-based instruction to establish students’ reliable performance of
important functional activities in typical settings as necessary to achieve their transition goals.

**Comprehensive Accountability Systems**

As noted by Brown, part of the solution for producing “better and integrated” outcomes when students are in schools lies with assessment; he identified specifically using authentic assessment early in a student’s school career and conducting annual post-school follow-up studies after students exit school. We agree, and suggest that an overall expansion of accountability systems would be critical in any reform effort that attempts to make instruction more meaningful for, and valued by, students with significant intellectual disabilities and their families.

If we begin with the desired long-term outcomes in mind (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), the focus of educational services becomes adult life and whether a student’s overall school experience has contributed to positive outcomes in relation to employment within the community, living independently and interdependently, having positive affiliations and friendships with others, and experiencing a sense of dignity and worth as a person. We agree with Brown’s suggestion that regular follow-up studies of adults by school systems, especially one year after students exit school, could offer an important tool for evaluating a district’s services for students in high school (ages 14-18 years) and in transition to adult life (ages 18-21 years old). This process also could be enhanced if it occurred in the context of previously established and routinely nurtured partnerships with businesses and community service agencies; these entities then could offer both useful information and critical insights into the elements of a program that need to be strengthened to improve the outcomes experienced by students and their families.

While post-school outcomes are a critical component of any comprehensive accountability system, there is also a need to rethink the current policies governing alternate assessments for students with significant intellectual disabilities. The alternate assessments used in most states have significant flaws that limit their validity and reliability and provide very little information to either IEP teams or school administrators to guide program improvement (Aryes et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2007; Ryndak et al., 2012). In spite of the flaws in the current approach to assessment for this group of students, we agree with Brown that IEP teams and schools must be held accountable for students’ achievement. We support an assessment approach that would focus on both students’ progress in the general education curriculum and the acquisition and use of skills in functional activities that will improve their overall quality of life during and after school. Consequently, we believe that future efforts to develop comprehensive accountability systems must focus on three general measures including post-outcomes, achievement in the general education curriculum, and quality-of-life during school.

**Conclusion**

Brown’s article raises a number of important questions about the future direction of educational programs for students with significant intellectual disabilities. We understand that the requirements of NCLB and IDEA have created a number of challenges for our field, but they also have created an important opportunity for us to reflect on some of our most basic assumptions about curriculum, instruction, and accountability for student outcomes. In the years since the enactment of these laws our field has developed and validated a number of new instructional approaches, interventions, and strategies that have increased students’ access to the general education curriculum and general education classes. What this says to us is that the way forward in addressing the challenges that these mandates have created is to combine the best of what we have done in the past with the best of what we are currently doing to develop and validate new approaches of curriculum design and instruction that allow the use of grade-level standards as a vehicle for improving the quality of the lives of students during and after school.

At the risk of dating ourselves, we all started our careers in the late 1970s and early 1980s right after Brown and his colleagues published *The Criterion of Ultimate Functioning and Public School Services for Severely Handicapped Students*. This paper inspired us and had a profound impact on the trajectories of each of our careers. Although it was a different time with a different set of issues, the last few sentences in that paper provide wise advice for how we address the challenges that we currently face in making students’ involvement in the general education curriculum meaningful:

…The skills of our students are limited by the information we have within our grasp. The information we have within our grasp is tragically meager. If substantial improvements in services to severely handicapped students are to accrue, new information must be generated. As educators we must realize that we are infants in this area, that most if not all of our pet theories must be revised, and that we need to expose our ideas and practices to the scrutiny of all. We must now confront our weaknesses, failures and insecurities and set about the long hard task of demonstrating, rather than inferring, the best possible services for a most deserving group of citizens. (p. 13)
Articles from our Contributors

Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities: A Response to Lou Brown

References


SPECIAL FEATURE

Upcoming TASH Conferences

Call For Proposals Deadline is Around the Corner!

Make sure you don’t miss the deadline for submitting your proposal for the 2014 TASH Conference, “Be the Future” scheduled to take place December 3-5.

This year’s theme is inspired by the culture TASH has established in its aim to achieve equity, opportunity and inclusion for people with significant disabilities in all aspects of community life. Since its inception, TASH members have been at the forefront in the development of evidence-based systems change; introducing appropriate methods to further inclusion; influencing policy to accomplish change for a wide range of stakeholders in the disability field; and making sure that no new ideas are introduced for us without us.

TASH has been the hub that brings together research, practice and advocacy to continue to look towards the future by bringing change today. In essence, the FUTURE is now and we all play an active part in the vision of equity, opportunity, and inclusion for all.

For more information or to submit your proposal, go to: http://conference.tash.org/cfp

The TASH Regional Conference, Education Equity Matters is Coming to St. Louis, MO, August 1!

Education Equity Matters is a one-day TASH regional conference with a specific focus on evidence-based practices in educating students with significant disabilities in inclusive classrooms and school communities. This conference will be held August 1, 2014, at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in St. Louis, Missouri.

This event is ideal for:
- Educators, School Administration and Resources Professionals
- State Agency Leaders and Staff (such as Dept. of Education and DD Council)
- Parents, Family Members and Self-Advocates
- University Faculty and Students
- Inclusive Education Advocates

Participants of this conference will learn the philosophy and values that guide successful practice and quality instruction, and understand the critical role of education leaders in education equity. We will examine proven strategies to building partnerships that consider all stakeholders, including students, educators, parents, school personnel and the surrounding community.
Special Feature: Upcoming TASH Conferences

Presenters will also highlight opportunities to affect change within schools and communities.

Those attending Education Equity Matters will also be introduced to the concepts and leaders of the SWIFT Center, a national technical assistance center that supports academic and behavioral outcomes of all students. The SWIFT Center is committed to eliminating silos in education, and bridging general and special education to create powerful learning opportunities.

For more information and to register, go to: http://tash.org/eematters

We Are All Set for TASH Regional Conference, Promoting Self Determined Futures, in Atlanta, GA, September 10!

*Promoting Self Determined Futures* is a one-day TASH regional conference. Its focus is on evidence-based practices in facilitating and supporting self direction as a tool for improved transition processes and results for youth with significant disabilities. This conference will be held Wednesday, September 10, 2014, at the Loudermilk Center, Atlanta, Georgia.

This event is ideal for:
- Educators, VR Practitioners, and Adult Service Professionals
- State Agency Leaders and Senior Staff (such as Dept. of Education, VR, DDS and DD Council)
- Parents and Family Members
- Advocates and Self Advocates
- Attorneys

Participants of this conference will learn the philosophy and values that guide practice; successful transition self-directed planning; employment experiences during high school and post secondary options that lead to employment; and roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder (parent, student, teacher, vocational rehabilitation counselor, and adult services) along the way.

We will examine effective assessment procedures that result in employment and positive community life outcomes. We will discuss effective strategies that engage college-age students in meaningful internships and paid community-based employment; and strategies that align employment to economic self-sufficiency.

For more information and to register, go to: http://tash.org/sdfutures.
SPECIAL FEATURE

A Snapshot of Federal Investments in Citizens with Significant Disabilities
### A Snapshot of Federal Investments in Citizens with Significant Disabilities

#### The Self-Sufficiency Investment Model

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<thead>
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<th>Education</th>
<th>Transition</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Financial Planning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full inclusion in community school via use of UDL, RTI and other evidence-based strategies</td>
<td>All partners presume employability and full community participation of youth into adulthood</td>
<td>Presumed eligibility to employment supports via VR, one-stops and local/state programs</td>
<td>Public funds directed at getting person into home in integrated setting.</td>
<td>Allow consumers and families to control allocated public resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimal exposure to general ed curriculum at appropriate age level</td>
<td>Transition planning begins as early as possible</td>
<td>Outcome is integrated employment in the general workforce</td>
<td>Ongoing personal supports to ensure optimal independence in the community.</td>
<td>Increase asset limits tied to eligibility of social insurance and other safety net programs to $10K.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to same extracurricular activities and opportunities as nondisabled peers</td>
<td>Full exposure transition activities offered to nondisabled students</td>
<td>Access to skills training based on needs of local employers</td>
<td>Focus investment not on programs and facility-based services, but rather on individualized supports and natural supports via innovation, customization and personalization through self-direction.</td>
<td>Exempt various savings vehicles from asset limits.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work experiences and jobs during secondary education = adult employment and thus required</td>
<td>Receive ongoing supports to retain job</td>
<td></td>
<td>Promote special tax advantaged savings tools for PWD.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Early linkages to post-secondary support to retain employment</td>
<td>Encouraged to work full-time or as close as possible to FTE</td>
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<td>Require financial literacy as part of public supports.</td>
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#### The Cyclical Dependency Model

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<tr>
<td>Segregated into separate classroom space and disconnected from age-appropriate general ed curriculum</td>
<td>Transition planning presumes low expectations of youth with disabilities.</td>
<td>Presumption of unemployability and thus ineligible for VR services or other employment supports.</td>
<td>Only form of housing that state Medicaid programs are required by are facility-based institutions.</td>
<td>Current Asset Limit has not been revised since 1985. Remains at $2,000 for individuals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transition strategies are not fully explored or prioritized as part of IEP.</td>
<td>Individual typically placed into prevocation services, day habilitation or sheltered workshop (all of which are segregated from society)</td>
<td>Group homes, institutions continue to be heavily invested in by public sources.</td>
<td>PWD have no savings accounts that are tax advantaged and exempt from asset limits.</td>
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<td>Transition indicators are not weighted as heavily as other education performance indicators.</td>
<td>Subminimum wages often paid.</td>
<td>Lack of $$ to pay for innovative individualized supports or to create natural supports create barriers to living independently.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No skills development to strengthen chances of securing job in generic workforce.</td>
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## Where the Rubber Hits the Road: Comparison of Federal Disability Investment Models & Rate-of-Return Investments

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<th>Life Category</th>
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<th>Self-Sufficiency Model</th>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>The Past, and Part of the Present</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Future (?) Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trends</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Costs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Place students with disabilities in separate special ed programs/classes or private school</td>
<td>• Segregation from mainstream</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Overuse of AA-AAS for 1% of Students with most Severe Disabilities</td>
<td>• Automatic non-diploma track for students and highest dropout rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limited access to age-appropriate general ed curriculum or classroom</td>
<td>• Lack of investment in communicative technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Fragmented services, limited program accessibility, and training focused on low-paying jobs or segregated activities</td>
<td>• Low, deteriorating employment rates</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Little exposure to employment-readiness transition programs</td>
<td>• Automatic demand for costliest services after exiting school.</td>
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• More cost effective
• Average cost $12K-15K

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A Snapshot of Federal Investments in Citizens with Significant Disabilities

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<tr>
<td>Trends</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Sheltered Workshops, Prevocational Services, Day Habilitation</td>
<td>Automatic access to SES &amp; Customized Employment Strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>ICF/MR</td>
<td>For every $5 mil, only 39 people served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HCBS Residential Facility</td>
<td>For every $5 million, 71 people served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings &amp; Asset Development</td>
<td>SGA &amp; Asset Limits</td>
<td>Increase in/ Lifting of Limits</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Tax</td>
<td>Advantaged Savings Options for PWD</td>
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Footnotes

1 NY State Department of Education joined Mayor Bloomberg recently to announce revisiting of state and local policies that are resulting in 4,000 students being bussed out of NY public schools and placed into segregated private school settings for students with special needs at a price tag of over $100 million annually to taxpayers.

2 In 50 studies comparing the academic performance of mainstreamed and segregated students with mild handicapping conditions, the mean academic performance of the integrated group was in the 80th percentile, while the segregated students score was in the 50th percentile (Weiner R., 1985). Additional meta-analyses confirm a small to moderate beneficial effect of inclusion education on the academic and social outcome of special needs students. (Carlberg, C. and Kavale, K. 1980; Baker, E.T., and Wang, M.C., and Walberg, H.J., 1994-95).


4 A 1989 study found that over a fifteen year period, the employment rate for high school graduates with special needs who had been in segregated programs was 53%. But for special needs graduates from integrated programs the employment rate was 73%. Furthermore, the cost of educating students in segregated programs was double that for educating them in integrated programs (Piuma, 1989). A similar study by Affleck, Madge, Adams, and Lowenbraun (1988) demonstrated that the integrated classroom for students with special needs was more cost-effective than the resource program.

5 Blackorby & Wagner (2001).

6 The dropout rate for students with disabilities is approximately twice that of general education students. Of those who do not complete high school, about 36% are students with learning disabilities and 59% are students with emotional/behavioral disabilities (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996).

7 Kearsn, J. et.al (2011)


9 According to the American Community Survey, four out of five persons with disabilities requiring significant supports are not considered part of the labor force. Only one in ten individuals with mental disabilities receiving Social Security Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments are considered to be in the workforce. While data specifically focused on employment trends in the significantly disabled is limited, we do know that state mental retardation/developmental disability (MR/DD) agencies provided day and employment supports to roughly 460,000 people in 2001. Among these individuals, approximately 23% of individuals supported by MR/DD agencies nationwide were employed in integrated employment settings, with individual state outcomes ranging from 2% to 56%. These numbers have remained stagnant for the past seven years. Employment outcomes for young adults with disabilities are deteriorating. From 1989 to 2000—both peak business-cycle years—the employment rate for persons ages 25 to 34 with self-reported work limitations fell from 57.5 to 40.9 percent (Mathematica, 2009; Houtenville and Daly 2003).

10 About 1.3 million persons ages 14 to 30 received SSI disability benefits in December 2007, at an estimated annual cost of $8.0 billion, and more than 300,000 received DI benefits in June 2008, at an estimated annual cost of more than $2 billion. On average, people who enter SSI before age 18 remain on the rolls for 27 years, receiving a stream of benefits worth more than $100,000 per youth (Mathematica, 2009; Rupp and Scott 1996).


12 Congressional Testimony from Commissioner Lynnae Rutledge, Rehabilitative Services Administration, March 2011.
TASH Internship Program
We are pleased to offer new and exciting learning experiences for students through our Internship Program. We are seeking candidates who have a passion for equity and inclusion and desire to make impactful change in the world for people with severe disabilities. If you are interested in our program, please visit http://tash.org/tash-is-accepting-intern-applications/.

TASH Awards Program
It is that time of year again! The TASH Awards Nomination process opened on March 25, 2014 and will close on Wednesday, June 25, 2014. In addition to the five standard awards, we have included a new award- Positive Behavior Support. Details on the individual awards and instructions on how to nominate can be found at http://tash.org/about/award-programs/.

TASH Web Based Trainings
TASH webinars bring leading experts on disability issues right to you. Earn professional development credit from your home or desk, or share your learning experience with colleagues for a cost-effective way to share critical information about the rapidly changing field of serving people with disabilities.

TASH webinars cover topics such as:
- Early Intervention and Early Childhood Education
- Employment for All: Customized Employment
- Inclusion for People With Developmental Disabilities
- Preventing Aversives, Restraints and Seclusion
- Sexuality and Relationships
- And many, many more

TASH webinars are the perfect opportunity for schools, service providers and university students to expand their professional knowledge through interactive presentations and group discussion. We have two upcoming webinars:

- PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) and PODD (Pragmatically Organized Dynamic Display): How both options promote communication (May 15)
- Fostering Friendships for All Abilities in All Activities (May 20)

For more information about upcoming training opportunities, please visit www.tash.org/training or contact Rick Green (rgreen@tash.org)

In Support of Alternative Assessments
Educators are responsible for the high quality education of all students in public schools: this is the mandate that congress established when it reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2002 (NCLB). For the first time schools were held accountable for the progress of all students, including students in subgroups historically vulnerable to poor educational outcomes, such as students of color, students living in poverty and students with disabilities. Recently, the value of assessing students with significantly disabilities has been publicly called into question, and TASH has responded by issuing a statement of support for alternate assessment. Learn more at http://tash.org/in-support-of-alternate-assessments/.

TASH-Backed Book Now Available
What key issues and challenges affect the lives of people with severe disabilities today—and what should tomorrow’s professionals do to address them? Aligned with the core values and agenda of TASH, this visionary text prepares professionals
Association News

Mark Your Calendar for this Year’s Conference

We’re thrilled to host the 2014 TASH Conference right in our nation’s capital! Join us this December 3-6 at the Renaissance DC Downtown Hotel. We’ll have additional information available soon at TASH.org. And keep a watch for the upcoming call for proposals. See you in DC!

2014 TASH Conference
December 3-5, 2014
Renaissance DC Downtown Hotel
Washington DC

New Year, New Address

As of February 1, 2014, the TASH office re-located to 2013 H Street NW, Suite 715, Washington, DC 20006. The new office space is located within the National Youth Transitions Center and will provide TASH with a welcoming office space with other leaders in disability and social justice. All TASH e-mail addresses and telephone numbers will remain the same. We look forward to serving our community at this new location.

Mail to:
TASH
2013 H Street NW, Suite 715
Washington, DC 20006

TASH Seeks Candidates for Next RPSD Editor

The TASH Editorial Search Committee has begun the search for the next editor of Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities. The new editor will serve a three-year term that begins officially in June 2014. The editor of RPSD also assumes an ex officio position on the Board of Directors. Learn more about this position and how to apply at the TASH website at http://tash.org/gv4t.

Preview this publication or place an order by visiting www.brookespublishing.com and searching for “TASH.”

to strengthen supports and services for people with disabilities across the lifespan. Readers will fully examine more than a dozen critical topics in the lives of people with severe disabilities; explore necessary reforms to policy and practice; and set clear goals and priorities for improving early intervention, education, health care, behavior supports, and social services. Whether used as a textbook or a professional reference, this innovative volume will help usher in a new era of services that support full inclusion and quality of life for people with severe disabilities.
NC TASH will be hosting its annual Summer Retreat for Families on Secondary Transition from June 19-20th.

During this time, NC TASH will be inviting experts in the field of secondary transition and adult services to lead breakout sessions on a variety of topics. In addition, there will be a TASH Night Out held which will allow parents and advocates to mix and mingle while enjoying a night of great food and entertainment. These events will provide a wonderful opportunity for parents to network and become involved in advocacy efforts in North Carolina. Lodging will be provided on the campus of Western Carolina University. For more information, please contact Kelly Kelley (kkelley@email.wcu.edu)

Barb Trader speaks at CalTASH’s 31st Annual Conference

March 7-8th marked the annual gathering of CalTASH, attracting advocates, professionals, researchers and policy makers from across the state for two great days of sharing and learning. Barb Trader, TASH’s Executive Director, provided updates on national initiatives to conference attendees at the opening luncheon. Barb reminded attendees that the civil rights framework for people with disabilities is well established at the federal level: and that implementation of that framework is the responsibility of states. She encouraged TASH members to become involved in advocacy efforts at the state and local level to hold decision makers and agency leaders accountable.

She collaborated later in the day with Susan Mizner, Disability Counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union for a workshop, The Promise of the Olmstead Decision. They reviewed current Department of Justice findings from settlement agreements related to sheltered workshops and offered ideas for ways advocates could use these DOJ findings and other federal documents, such as guidance and regulation, to promote inclusive education, integrated employment, life in the community, and better outcomes overall. A copy of the presentation is available by contacting the Advocacy Communications Manager at 202-540-8014.

Colorado Chapter Showing Including Samuel

The Colorado Chapter will be hosting showings of Including Samuel (a film by Dan Habib http://www.includingsamuel.com/home.aspx) in three cities in Colorado, starting with Centennial on November 4. The next showing will be in Grand Junction in December, and in Colorado Springs in January.

Vice President of Virginia TASH Stepping Down

VA TASH would like to announce that our Vice President - Neia Izen, will be stepping down from the position in December. Her leadership and dedication in helping our VA TASH Chapter get started and organized has meant so much to our group. We will miss her dearly and wish her well in further endeavors!
Virginia “TASH Night Out“
VA TASH had its first ‘TASH Night Out’ in October. The event, which was held in Northern VA, was highly successful and included a film on restraint and seclusion. We are currently planning our next TASH Night Out, to be held in Southwest Virginia in the spring.

New England “TASH Night Out“
Bob and Gail Fanjoy’s 5th Annual TASH Night Out was held on Saturday, August 17th in Maine. This year’s theme was “A Taste of Italy”. Guests dined around the backyard pool on Italian-themed tables, received chef’s hats for guest gifts, and were treated to antipasto, an assortment of Italian entrees, gelato and biscotti for dessert. After dinner, the Italian movie classic Roman Holiday was featured on a giant outdoor screen. Guests came to “party with a purpose”, enjoy the company of like-minded friends, and feel good about contributing to the lives of people with disabilities and their families through their donations to TASH and TASH New England. This year’s party raised a total of $1000.

TASH New England “FUN Raiser“
By popular request, another TASH New England FUN Raiser will be held at Lesley University in Cambridge on October 29, 2013. This is an opportunity to meet and network with other Boston area folks committed to equity and inclusion and the human rights of individuals with disabilities.

Come, bring a friend / make a friend, meet the movers and shakers, and informally discuss policy / research / (and yes!) gossip; get the latest on the national conference!

Light refreshments will be served. It’s a FUN evening for serious people who should know each other.
TASH Gratefully Acknowledges the Following Donations of Time and Money

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>University of Illinois</td>
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<td>at Chicago Dept of</td>
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<td>Disability and Human</td>
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<td>Development</td>
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Illinois State Board of Education

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National Youth Transitions Conference Support Fund

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The Coleman Foundation
New Membership  Membership Renewal  Referred by __________________________

Member Type:  Individual  Organization (org. member name): ________________________________________________

First Name: ____________________________ Last Name: ____________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________

City/State/ZIP: _______________________________________________________________ Country: ______________

Phone 1: ________________________________ Primary  E-mail 1: ________________________________ Primary

Phone 2: ________________________________ Primary  E-mail 2: ________________________________ Primary

(Organization Members Only) Are you the primary contact?  Yes  No

Primary Contact Name: ________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________ E-mail: ________________________________

Membership Level

TASH offers membership at a variety of levels. Please review the details below and choose the membership level that is appropriate for you. Individual and organizational memberships are available. Membership is valid for a 12 month term. A complete summary of member benefits can be found at www.tash.org/membership.

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<th>Basic  $30</th>
<th>Standard  $75</th>
<th>Premium  $150</th>
<th>Student  $45</th>
<th>Small Org  $250</th>
<th>Large Org  $350</th>
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<td>Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, the official TASH research journal (print copy)</td>
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<td>Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, (online access to current and archived issues)</td>
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<td>Connections, the quarterly magazine written by and for TASH members (includes current and archived issues)</td>
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<td>TASH in Action bi-weekly e-newsletter</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Training discounts for webinars, publications and other offerings</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>3 STAFF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced registration rates for TASH Conference and events</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Affiliation with a TASH Chapter</td>
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<td>Advocacy Alerts &amp; Updates</td>
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*Student members are required to identify university: ____________________________

-Continued on Next Page-
Demographic Information (optional)

Which of the following best describes you? (select all that apply)
- Person with Disability
- Family Member
- Student
- Professor/Researcher
- Early Intervention
- Adult Service Provider/Related Services
- Special/Generic Educator
- Govt/Legal/Public Policy
- Other

What is your race or ethnicity? (select all that apply)
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- White/Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Other

Are you affiliated with a university? If so, please specify:

Please indicate your areas of interest (select all that apply)
- Community Living
- Early Childhood
- Education
- Self-Advocacy
- Public Policy
- International Issues
- Employment/Transition
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- Cultural Competency/Diversity
- Human Rights/Social Justice

Payment Information

Credit Card (select card type)
- American Express
- Visa
- MasterCard
- Discover

Check (make payable to TASH)

Purchase Order
- P.O. #: ____________________________

Card #: ____________________________ Expiration: ____________
Name on Card: ____________________________ CVV: ____________
Authorized Signature: ____________________________

Would you like to make a tax-deductible donation to TASH?

- $10
- $25
- $50
- $100
- $ ______

Total Payment (add membership total and donation, if applicable) $: ____________

Please submit this membership form via mail, fax or e-mail. With questions, contact (202) 540-9020.

TASH
2013 H Street, NW, Suite 715
Washington, DC 20006

Fax (202) 540-9019
E-mail info@tash.org

www.tash.org to learn more about TASH
www.tash.org/member to log in to the membership portal
www.tash.org/membership for an overview of member benefits
TASH is an international leader in disability advocacy. Founded in 1975, TASH advocates for human rights and inclusion for people with significant disabilities and support needs – those most vulnerable to segregation, abuse, neglect and institutionalization. TASH works to advance inclusive communities through advocacy, research, professional development, policy, and information and resources for parents, families and self-advocates. The inclusive practices TASH validates through research have been shown to improve outcomes for all people.

**Policy Statement**

It is TASH’s mission to eliminate physical and social obstacles that prevent equity, diversity and quality of life for children and adults with disabilities. Items in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect attitudes held by individual members of the Association as a whole. TASH reserves the right to exercise editorial judgment in selection of materials. All contributors and advertisers are asked to abide by the TASH policy on the use of people-first language that emphasizes the humanity of people with disabilities. Terms such as “the mentally retarded,” “autistic children,” and “disabled individuals” refer to characteristics of individuals, not to individuals themselves. Terms such as “people with mental retardation,” “children with autism,” and “individuals who have disabilities” should be used. The appearance of an advertisement for a product or service does not imply TASH endorsement. For a copy of TASH’s publishing and advertising policy, please visit www.tash.org.

**TASH Mission & Vision**

As a leader in disability advocacy for more than 35 years, the mission of TASH is to promote the full inclusion and participation of children and adults with significant disabilities in every aspect of their community, and to eliminate the social injustices that diminish human rights. These things are accomplished through collaboration among self-advocates, families, professionals, policy-makers, advocates and many others who seek to promote equity, opportunity and inclusion. Together, this mission is realized through:

- Advocacy for equity, opportunities, social justice and human rights
- Education of the public, government officials, community leaders and service providers
- Research that translates excellence to practice
- Individualized, quality supports in place of congregate and segregated settings and services
- Legislation, litigation and public policy consistent with the mission and vision of TASH

The focus of TASH is supporting those people with significant disabilities and support needs who are most at risk for being excluded from society; perceived by traditional service systems as most challenging; most likely to have their rights abridged; most likely to be at risk for living, working, playing and learning in segregated environments; least likely to have the tools and opportunities necessary to advocate on their behalf; and are most likely to need ongoing, individualized supports to participate in inclusive communities and enjoy a quality of life similar to that available to all people.

TASH has a vision of a world in which people with disabilities are included and fully participating members of their communities, with no obstacles preventing equity, diversity and quality of life. TASH envisions communities in which no one is segregated and everyone belongs. This vision will be realized when:

- All individuals have a home, recreation, learning and employment opportunities
- All children and youth are fully included in their neighborhood schools
- There are no institutions
- Higher education is accessible for all
- Policy makers and administrators understand the struggles of people with disabilities and plan – through laws, policies and regulations – for their active participation in all aspects of life
- All individuals have a way to communicate and their communities are flexible in communicating in alternate ways that support full participation
- Injustices and inequities in private and public sectors are eradicated
- Practices for teaching, supporting and providing services to people with disabilities are based on current, evidence-based strategies that promote high quality and full participation in all aspects of life
- All individuals with disabilities enjoy individualized supports and a quality of life similar to that available to all people
- All individuals with disabilities have the tools and opportunities to advocate on their behalf