The Common Core State Standards and Students with Moderate/Severe Disabilities

Using an Ecological Curricular Framework to Develop Standards-Based Academic Goals

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A little about me . . .

- **Professor and Coordinator**
- **Director: California Deaf-Blind Services**
- **Research areas**
- **Mom told me Coeur d’Alene stories**
A little about you . . .

- Teachers?
- Parents?
- School district administrators?
- University faculty?
- Have I missed anyone?
Please contribute to the discussion

Please make comments and ask questions throughout the discussion
An Ecological Curricular Framework

Guides Assessment Activities, the Development of IEP Goals, Curriculum Design, and Instruction
Ecological Curricular Framework

The focus of educational programs for students who experience more significant disabilities is to teach skills and arrange educational and social environments to increase the students’ quality of life.
Not always the case. . .

- **PL 94-142, 1975**: Educators presented with the challenge of developing a curriculum for students who experienced moderate to the most significant cognitive disabilities.

- Turned to the literature on childhood development (cognitive, physical, social) as the basis for the curricular model.

- **Developmental curricular model**: The educational activities were based on some combination of the following hypotheses:
Teaching skills, using materials, and arranging the instructional setting in ways that did not match the student’s chronological age or the activities of their peers without disabilities
2. Not-Ready-for Hypothesis

- The student with moderate-severe disabilities was not ready for instruction on age-level activities in natural, integrated school environments
- Not ready--cognitively, physically, socially
- Must progress through successive, linear, developmental sequences on the way toward age-appropriate and functional skills and access to the general education curriculum
• What can I teach my students that will increase their connection to and participation in their worlds of school, home, and community?

• What are the outcomes for my students that are desirable after graduation, and how could curriculum be designed to facilitate achievement of those outcomes?
Selection of Educational Goals

- Was individualized and dynamic and took into account
  - the students’ and their family’s preferences, needs, and resources
  - the opportunities and supports that were available to the students in their community
  - the students’ long-term goals and aspirations
Three Concepts Guiding Curriculum Development

1. **Functional and meaningful skills that increase the student’s quality of life**
   - Are tailored to a student’s individual needs
   - Are applicable to their everyday lives

2. **Chronologically age-appropriate skills, materials, and activities**
   - A question of dignity
   - Typical peers are engaging in age-level activities

3. **Teaching in and across natural settings**
   - The environment in which the skill is required
   - Generalization (quality of life outcomes)
Program Effectiveness

- Evaluated in terms of its impact on
  - his or her independence and autonomy
  - promoting a student’s use of community resources,
  - ability to live where and with whom he or she chooses,
  - opportunity to have paid employment in typical businesses and industries, and
Curricular Trends That Followed the Establishment of an Ecological Approach to Curricula Development
Early 1980s

Conclusion that a segregated education does not provide opportunities to develop the skills and establish the relationships that lead to a meaningful adult life.
Significant Shift in Placement Patterns

- From separate schools with no possibility for contact with peers
- To self-contained classrooms on general education campuses
- To fully inclusive service delivery models in which students with disabilities are full-time members of general education classrooms with full access to typical peers and the general education curriculum
Focus on Quality of Life Outcomes Remained

- Increased emphasis on
  - Membership
  - Belonging
  - Development of positive social relationships and friendships with peers

- Social supports and facilitation strategies were implemented
Early to Mid 90’s

Ecological curricular approach was expanded to include an emphasis on educational outcomes associated with participation in the general education curriculum and classroom activities.
Most Recently

With the entrance into standards-based reform and participation in statewide, standards-based accountability systems--

- Increased emphasis on access to the general education curriculum
- The development of academic goals
- Measurement of academic outcomes
Conflict

Focus on standards-based *academic* content and academic IEP goals

versus

Educational programs that support acquisition of *functional routines and skills* that are necessary to live, work, and participate in the community
Example: Different Perspectives

- Courtade, Spooner, & Browder (2012): Students with severe disabilities have the right to full educational opportunity; we do not know the potential of students with severe disabilities; students are creating the changing expectations with their own achievements.

- Ayres, Lowrey, Douglas, & Sievers (2012): “A critical piece that is missing at this point is a careful examination of the role of standards-based curriculum on the outcomes for students with severe disabilities. Are they more likely to live independently? Are they more likely to participate in their communities in meaningful ways?

- WHAT DO YOU THINK?
A Need for Reconciliation

Hunt & McDonnell (2012)

- Time to move beyond casting the debate as a choice between an ecological curriculum or the general education curriculum
- Propose: that an ecological approach with a focus on quality of life outcomes be reconciled with the development and implementation of standards-based academic curriculum
To Accomplish This Reconciliation, We propose

1. An ecological approach to curriculum development (with a focus on quality of life outcomes) become the overarching framework for all curriculum development activities

2. IEP teams engage in a process that allows them to work within an ecological curricular framework to develop both standards-based academic goals and functional goals that
   (a) reflect meaningful knowledge and skills
   (b) are tailored to a student’s individual needs
   (c) are applicable to their everyday lives.
3. Instructional approaches and strategies not only provide effective instruction, but also promote **generalized outcomes** for both academic and functional skills
Proposed:
IEP team process; instructional approaches
Six Process Steps
Step 1: Identify quality of life goal areas for individual students through family and student-centered assessment activities.

- The quality of life goal areas for individual students identified through an educational team decision-making process both anchor and drive the process for identifying and teaching standards-based academic goals.

- Identified through a variety of ecological assessments.
Purpose of the ecological assessments:

- to identify educational goals that connect students to their worlds of home, school, and community
- to develop curricula that are relevant to students’ individual lives and interests
- to identify goals that improve post-school outcomes (independence and autonomy, social participation, employment, independent living)
- **Ecological inventories** (Brown et al., 1979; Brown Lehr, & Snell)

- **Family interviews and collaborative planning processes** (Giangreco, Clonginger, & Iverson, 1998; Hunt, Soto, Maier & Doering, 2003; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1997; SPED 773/787)

- **Person-centered planning** (Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint, & Rosenberg, 1997; Mount & Zernick, 1988; SPED 773)
Quality of life goal areas are individualized and include areas such as

- communication and social competence,
- development of positive social relationships and friendships,
- increased independence within classroom and school, community, and vocational routines,
- and self-management, self-determination, and problem-solving skills
We propose

- **Quality of life goals--**
  - Historically: have been defined in utilitarian terms (e.g., increased independence and access),
  - We propose: expanded to include knowledge that is “good in and of itself”

- **Academic content knowledge that is life enriching** because it opens up a student’s understanding of the physical, historical, cultural, and social/political world

- **Academic knowledge of high interest** to the student

- **Academic skills that increase the student’s ability to become a life-long learner** (e.g., reading skills)
Two Students

Anna: 5th grade; currently communicating with some concrete words, photos, and graphic icons

- **Quality of life goal areas:**
  1. Communication to express wants and needs, share information, make choices, and interact socially;
  2. Development of positive social relationships and friendships with peers;
  3. Development of self-monitoring and problem-solving skills to increase active, positive and productive engagement;
  4. Life enrichment through the development of emergent literacy skills and motivating academic content knowledge;
  5. Increased independence in classroom and school activities.
Jamal: 10th grade; communicating with one-syllable written words and concrete to abstract graphic icons

- Quality of life goal areas: Communication to engage in conversation turntaking with peers and to share feelings, information, and perspectives with others; (b) development of positive social relationships and friendships with peers; (c) development of self-management and problem-solving skills; (d) life enrichment through gaining meaningful academic content knowledge and the development of reading and writing skills; and (e) increased independence within community-living contexts and activities
Step 2: Identify priority, grade-level content standards from the state standards frameworks.

- With individual student’s quality of life goal areas in mind, teachers consider the grade-level content standards in the major domain areas.
- Task: identify standards that are priority because they represent “big ideas” or key content that will support the student’s ability to achieve his or her life goals.
ELA Domains

- Reading literature
- Reading informational texts
- Reading foundation skills
- Writing
- Speaking and listening
- Language
Examples for Anna and Jamal

- **Anna: ELA: Reading Literature**

- **Priority grade-level standard:** 5th grade reading standard (Common Core State Standards):
  “Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.”
Examples for Anna and Jamal

- **Jamal**: Math: number and quantities

- **Priority grade-level standard**: 10th grade reading standard for number and quantities (National Common Core Standards for Geometry): “Use units as a way to understand problems and to guide the solution of multi-step problems; choose and interpret units consistently in formulas; choose and interpret the scale and the origin in graphs and data displays.”
Step 3: Identify the critical function of each selected standard in terms of enriching students’ lives

- Educational team members look beyond the “form” of an academic content standard to the “function” of the standard in enhancing the quality of life of all students (Kleinert & Thurlow, 2001)

- When standards are translated into their critical functions, quality of life goal areas for individual students may be naturally and logically linked to them
Examples for Anna and Jamal

- **Anna--Priority grade-level standard**: “Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.”

- **Critical function of the standard**: Accessing and comprehending main ideas in a meaningful, accessible text.
Examples for Anna and Jamal

- **Jamal--Priority grade-level standard:** “Use units as a way to understand problems and to guide the solution of multi-step problems; choose and interpret units consistently in formulas; choose and interpret the scale and the origin in graphs and data displays.”

- **Critical function of the standard:** Using the measurement of quantities to solve problems and understand data displays that provide useful information.
Step 4: Identify meaningful, individualized performance outcomes associated with the critical function of selected standards that reflect the student’s quality of life goal areas and current level of symbol use.

- **Quality of life goal areas**
- **The critical function of the relevant content standards**
- **Student’s current level of symbol use**

*Performance outcomes*
Key consideration in constructing performance outcomes: student’s current level of symbol use

- Students are currently communicating with nonsymbolic behaviors (e.g., facial expressions, body movements, gestures) and may just be learning that objects and photographs can serve as symbol systems.

- Students who understand and currently communicate with concrete symbols (e.g., concrete words, photo symbols, concrete graphic icons).

- Students who understand and communicate with abstract symbols (e.g., abstract words, abstract graphic icons, signs).
Examples of the student’s current level of symbol use as a critical factor in constructing performance outcomes related to each standard

- **Critical function (5th-grade reading standard):** ”Accessing and comprehending the major themes of a meaningful accessible text”

- **For a student learning that symbols have meaning:** Selecting books and other reading materials; book orientation and turning pages as a story is read; increasing awareness and engagement in story reading; identifying main characters and predicting what is going to happen next in a story using objects; and inserting repetitive lines in stories or poems at appropriate times using a voice output communication aid.
Other ELA domains relevant to these performance outcomes?

- Selecting books and other reading materials; book orientation and turning pages as a story is read; increasing awareness and engagement in story reading; identifying main characters and predicting what is going to happen next in a story using objects; and inserting repetitive lines in stories or poems at appropriate times using a voice output communication aid.

- Reading literature, reading informational texts, reading foundations
- Writing
- Speaking and listening
- Language
For a student who understands and currently communicates with concrete symbols (concrete words and photographs and concrete graphic icons):

- Following stories and other texts as they are read in a shared reading context with photos and graphic icons on a communication board; answering questions about the text and predicting what will come next by pointing to symbols on a communication board; arranging three pictures in the order in which the ideas they represent appear in the text.

- (Other relevant standards)
Total literacy program (multiple relevant standards):

- Engagement in shared literature reading (text awareness, listening comprehension, and vocabulary)
- Reading instruction to increase independence as a reader (phonemic awareness phonics, comprehension, vocabulary)—research-based emergent reading program designed for and validated with students with severe disabilities
Performance Outcomes for Jamal: Math (Geometry) Standard

- **Critical function of the standard:** Using the measurement of quantities to solve problems and understand data displays that provide useful information.

- **Performance outcomes:** (1) using the “dollar-up” method to purchase items, (2) using measuring cups and spoons to measure ingredients to complete each step of a simple recipe; and (3) using a scale to measure current weight, record it on a graph, and compare it to the height/weight chart.

- **Functional, but related to the standard**
Step 5: Generate IEP goals and objectives to address the performance outcomes

- **Academic “performance outcomes” are written as goals on the student’s IEP along with those relevant to the student’s quality of life goals areas that are not academic in nature.**

- **All goals describe observable, measurable performance outcomes that address quality of life goals areas and performance criteria that include generalization across multiple materials and contexts.**
Example for Anna and Jamal

- **Anna—Critical function of the standard:** Accessing and comprehending main ideas in a meaningful, accessible text

- **IEP goal:** Given a variety of grade-level stories and poems adapted to Anna’s reading level, she will (1) follow the texts as they are read in a shared reading context with photos and graphic icons on a communication board; (2) answer questions about the text and predict what will come next by pointing to appropriate symbols on the communication board; and (3) summarize the text by arranging three pictures in the order in which the ideas they represent appear in the text.
Examples for Anna and Jamal

- **Jamal--Critical function of the standard:** Using the measurement of quantities to solve problems and understand data displays that provide useful information.

- **IEP goal:** Jamal will use measurement strategies and tools to solve problems by (1) using the “dollar-up” method to purchase items in school and the community, (2) using measuring cups and spoons to measure ingredients to complete each step of a simple recipe during econ. class and at home; and (3) using a scale to measure current weight, record it on a graph, and compare it to the height/weight chart during gym class and at home.
1. Identify quality of life goal areas for individual students

2. Identify priority, grade-level content standards

3. Identify the critical function of each standard

4. Identify meaningful, individualized performance outcomes (consider quality of life goal areas; critical function of the relevant standards; student’s current level of symbol understanding)

5. Develop IEP goals that address the performance outcomes
Step 6: Teach these academic skills within and across meaningful activities that provide context and motivation

- **Goal**: Acquisition and generalization to the students’ daily lives

- **Recommend three general strategies** that will likely increase the likelihood that students will apply academic knowledge and skills to their everyday lives (however, research needed in this area)
# 1: Teaching skills in multiple ways during the school day

- **Embedded instruction within the context of large and small group academic lessons in classrooms with adaptations and modifications**

- **Embedded academic instruction in the context of school, community, or vocational routines**
Instructional plans for Anna’s and Jamal’s IEP Goals

- **Anna**—Following adapted grade-level texts when they are read with symbols on a communication board; answering comprehension and prediction questions; summarizing the stories.

  *Instructional plan:* (a) Engaging in shared reading of adapted grade-level stories and poems in small group contexts; (b) acting out scenes from stories with classmates using a voice output communication aid; and (c) engaging in shared reading activities with family members.

- **Jamal**—Using measurement strategies and tools to solve problems.

  *Instructional plan:* (a) purchasing items at school and in the community using the “dollar-up” method; (b) selecting and preparing a simple meal with peers by reading and following the steps of an adapted recipe in home econ. class and eating the meal while conversing with peers; (c) practicing cooking and conversation skills at mealtime with parents at home; and (d) measuring weight each week in gym class and at home, recording on a graph, and comparing to a height/weight chart.
# 2: Incorporate authentic tasks into instruction

- Linking student learning to real world problems and situations (Berryman, 1993; Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Resnick, 1987)
  - increases motivation because instruction is more meaningful
  - increases the likelihood that students will be able to generalize new knowledge to everyday tasks
Instructional plans for Anna’s and Jamal’s IEP Goals

- **Anna**—Following adapted grade-level texts when they are read with symbols on a communication board; answering comprehension and prediction questions; summarizing the stories...

- **Instructional plan:** Using books and poems that other students her age are reading

- **Jamal**—Using measurement strategies and tools to solve problems...

- **Instructional plan:** (a) purchasing items at school and in the community using the “dollar-up” method; (b) selecting and preparing a simple meal with peers by reading and following the steps of an adapted recipe in home econ. class and eating the meal while conversing with peers; (c) practicing cooking and conversation skills at mealtime with parents at home; and (d) measuring weight each week in gym class and at home, recording on a graph, and comparing to a height/weight chart
# 3: Incorporate student-directed learning activities into instruction

- *Purpose:* to increase students’ autonomy in participating in classroom activities and reduce the level of assistance from general and special educators (Agran et al., 2005; Hughes et al., 2002; Koegel, Harrower, & Koegel, 1999)
- Giving students choices within instructional contexts
- Teaching students steps that can be used to solve similar kinds of problems
- Teaching students to self-monitor their actions in completing a daily routine or academic task
- Teaching students to set their own instructional goals
- How can student-directed activities be built into the instructional plans for Anna and Jamal?
How to incorporate student-directed learning?

- **Anna**—Accessing and comprehending main ideas in a meaningful, accessible text

- **Instructional plan:** (a) Engaging in shared reading of adapted grade-level stories and poems in small group contexts; (b) acting out scenes from stories with classmates using a voice output communication aid; and (c) engaging in shared reading activities with family members
How to incorporate student-directed learning?

- **Jamal**—Using measurement strategies and tools to solve problems.

- **Instructional plan:** (a) purchasing items at school and in the community using the “dollar-up” method; (b) selecting and preparing a simple meal with peers by reading and following the steps of an adapted recipe in home econ. class and eating the meal while conversing with peers; (c) practicing cooking and conversation skills at mealtime with parents at home; and (d) measuring weight each week in gym class, recording on a graph, and comparing to a height/weight chart.
Are Anna’s and Jamal’s quality of life goals addressed in the academic instructional contexts?
Instructional plans for Anna’s and Jamal’s IEP Goals

- **Anna—Instructional plan:** (a) Engaging in shared reading of adapted grade-level stories and poems in small group contexts; (b) acting out scenes from stories with classmates using a voice output communication aid; and (c) engaging in shared reading activities with family members

- **Quality of life goal areas:**
  1. Communication to express wants and needs, share information, make choices, and interact socially
  2. Development of positive social relationships and friendships with peers
  3. Development of self-monitoring and problem-solving to increase active, productive engagement
  4. Life enrichment through the development of emergent literacy skills and motivating academic content knowledge
  5. Increased independence in classroom and school activities
Instructional plans for Anna’s and Jamal’s IEP Goals

- **Jamal**—Instructional plan: (a) purchasing items at school and in the community using the “dollar-up” method; (b) selecting and preparing a simple meal with peers by reading and following the steps of an adapted recipe in home econ. class and eating the meal while conversing with peers; (c) practicing cooking and conversation skills at mealtime with parents at home; and (d) measuring weight each week in gym class, recording on a graph, and comparing to a height/weight chart.

- **Quality of life goal areas:**
  1. Communication to engage in conversation turntaking with peers and to share feelings, information, and perspectives with others.
  2. Development of positive social relationships and friendships with peers.
  4. Life enrichment through gaining meaningful academic content knowledge and further development of reading and writing skills.
  5. Increased independence in community contexts and activities.
Comments? Questions?