

Creating Access to General Curriculum for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities Through Inclusion

Ginevra Courtade, PhD

Who Am I Talking About?

- Students with significant cognitive disabilities
 - Other terms you may have heard
 - Students with MR
 - Moderate/ severe disabilities
 - Low-incidence disabilities
 - Require substantial modifications, adaptations, or supports to meaningfully access grade level content
 - Require intensive individualized instruction to acquire and generalize knowledge
 - Is working toward alternate achievement standards for grade level content

What experiences
have you had with
students with
significant cognitive
disabilities?

What Am I Talking About?

- Access to the General Curriculum
 - Academic progress-mastering some alternate achievement standards for each grade level
 - More than exposure, but not mastering all of the grade level content

Why Teach the General Curriculum?

- Federal Laws
- Provide equal access
- Do not underestimate student potential



IDEA 1997

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

No Child Left Behind

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

NCLB Regulations/ Guidance

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

Promoting Equal Access

- How do you know the progress a student can make if you don't attempt to teach the skills?
- Just because he can't tie his shoe or toilet himself doesn't mean he won't learn to read

What About Functional Curriculum?

- Community, leisure, domestic, work related skills
- Focus on academic and functional skills
 - Grocery shopping-what academic skills are needed?
 - Using public transportation-what academic skills are needed?

Does inclusion achieve access to the general curriculum?

- Access to the general curriculum is not synonymous with inclusion
 - In gen ed-just because the student is there, doesn't mean he/she has access
 - In a self-contained classroom-just because it is self-contained, doesn't mean that he/she does not have access

What is inclusion?

- Educating students with disabilities alongside their chronological same age peers in general education within their neighborhood schools
 - “FULL INCLUSION”: “Belong” to the general education class

What is the rationale for general education inclusion for this population?

- Benefits for students with disabilities
 - Social interaction
 - Role models
 - Higher expectations for performance
 - Enhance lifelong inclusion in society
- Benefits for students who are nondisabled
 - Learn to get along with diverse people
 - Get to know students with severe disabilities as people
 - Learn about human service professions

Research Supports Including Students with Severe Disabilities

- Inclusion works when you have
 - Collaborative teams
 - Parent involvement
 - Curriculum planning & adaptations
- When inclusion works
 - Ss with severe disabilities learn IEP goals & make social gains
 - Ss who are nondisabled continue to make academic gains
 - Hunt & Goetz (1997)

What should inclusion look like for this population?

- Placement in natural, typical settings
 - Age appropriate classes
 - Home schools
 - For all or most of the day
 - On an ongoing basis
 - For instructional and noninstructional activities

What should inclusion look like?

- All students together for instruction and learning
- Supports and modifications within general ed to meet learner outcomes
- Belongingness, equal membership, acceptance and being valued
 - *this starts with the teachers
- Collaborative integrated services by education teams

Components of Inclusion

- Physical inclusion
 - Strategies to get student scheduled and present in general education
- Social inclusion
 - Strategies to promote the student belonging as a member of the class
- Instructional inclusion
 - Strategies that make it possible for the student to master IEP goals AND learn through general curriculum activities

Physical Inclusion



- Neighborhood School?
- What grade/age class(es) in the school?
- Any pull out time? If so- where & why?
- Paraprofessional support?

Working Towards Inclusion?

- “Integration in” peer buddies join the class
- Interaction after arriving at school?
- Lunch with typical peers? At same table?
- Inclusion in classes not related to EOGs- music, art, PE?
- Inclusion during academics?
- “Belongs” to general ed class and special teacher provides support

How Some Schools Have Made Inclusion Work

- Everyone in class works with peer buddy; peer buddies rotate
- Lunch buddy sign up program
- Paraprofessional support to not only student with disabilities, but all students
- Co-teaching by special education teacher

Social Inclusion

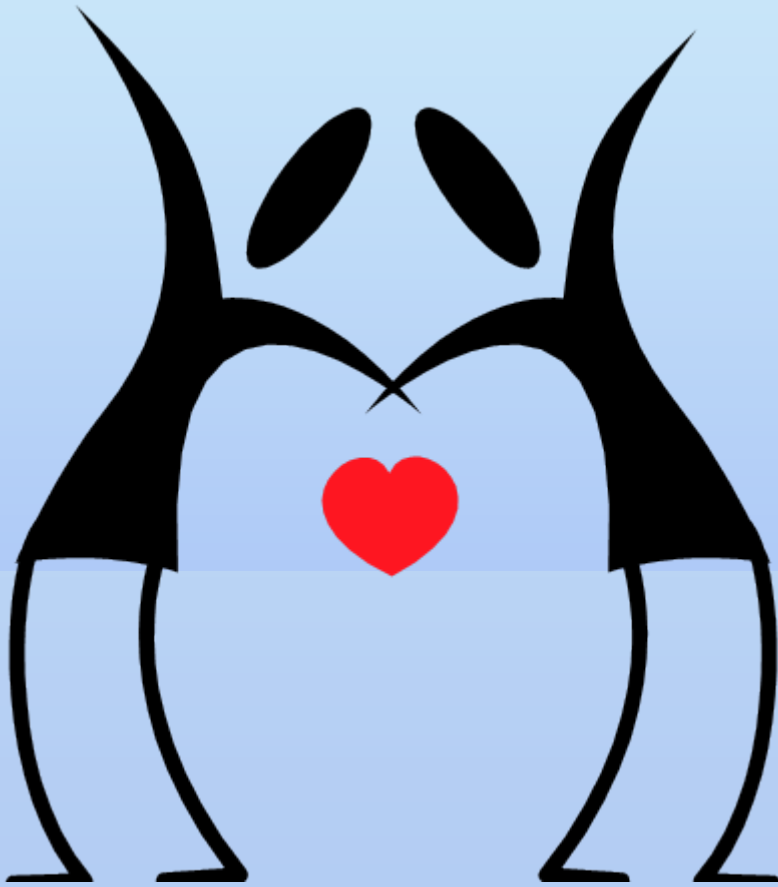
- Social network: a group of people who offer opportunities for socialization, fun, working together, emotional support
- Who is in the social network of students with severe disabilities?
 - (Circles of support)

What a Social Network Offers



- For many a “quality of life” indicator
- Social interactions skills are best learned in stable relationships
- As social contacts increase, need for behavioral support decreases

Teachers Can Promote Social Networks



- Encourage mingling in physical layout of class
- Use units on friendship
- Create a warm class environment
- Model social responses to person with disability

Instructional Inclusion



Cascade of Integration Options

A range of accommodations for students with significant disabilities who are included in general education

How will the students participate?

- Unadapted participation in the general curriculum
 - Same activities, same objectives, same setting
- Ask yourself
 - Can the students complete the activity as written for a gen ed student?
 - Do one or more lesson objectives match the students' IEPs?

How will the students participate?

- Adaptations to the general curriculum
 - Same activities, different (related) objectives, same setting
- Ask yourself
 - Can the students meet the lesson objectives with minor modifications (time, response mode)?

How will the students participate?

- Embedded skills within the general curriculum
 - Similar activity, different (related) objectives, same setting
- Ask yourself
 - Are there components of the activity that can be met by the student, even if not the central objective of the lesson but, match the IEP objective?

Roles of the Teachers- Preplanning

General Education Teacher

■ Unit Plan Analysis

- What are the objectives of the lesson
- What steps must students understand to complete the unit
- Will the unit include individual and/or group activities
 - Cooperative learning groups, individual, group activities, individual & group
- What learner products are expected?
 - Written report, oral report, tests, graphic displays
- What is the time frame to complete the activities
- What are the required materials?
- How will student progress be assessed?

Roles of the Teachers- Preplanning

- Special Education Teacher
 - What are the IEP objectives for this student
 - What areas from the IEP can be addressed within this unit?
 - Does the student have characteristics that will require adaptations?
 - Cognitive skills, motor skills, communication skills, social skills
 - What levels of adaptations from the continuum are appropriate for this student for different activities within this unit?
 - What required unit adaptations could be made in terms of this following: materials, time requirements, product expectations

Roles of the Teachers- Planning

- Collaborative Planning Meeting
 - What IEP objectives can be worked on during content area instruction?
 - What adaptations or accommodations will be required to work on these objectives
 - What supports will the general education teacher need to successfully complete the activity (paraprofessional present, adaptive equipment, materials adaptation, co-teach with the special educator)
 - How will progress be assessed?

Example

- Activity
 - Assign to 1 of 3 map groups (political, geographic, natural resources); start research for map information; textbooks, newspaper, CD-ROM, internet; 30 minutes library time
- IEP objectives
 - Reading-Identify parts of the newspaper for peers to find map information
 - Social Skills-take turns interacting with peers; maintain appropriate personal space
 - Gross motor-manipulate wheelchair to and within library

- Support needed from the special educator
 - Co-teach presentation of the map assignment to the class
 - Technical support-program communication device; teach peers to elicit communication

- What level of adaptation is this?
 - Activity-same, similar, different?
 - Objectives-same different?
 - Setting-same, different?

Example #2

- Activity
 - Continue map making; draw the map including scale, legend, major cities, and landmarks; draw or color features for the specific map in appropriate location; 1 hour-map making
- IEP objective
 - Fine motor-paste 3 objects on the map; math-paste the 3 objects in the proper coordinates; communication-initiate communication with peers using a device

- Support needed from the special educator
 - Technical support-objects for map; program communication device

 - What level of adaptation is this?
 - Activity-same, similar, different?
 - Objectives-same different?
 - Setting-same, different?

Example #3

- Activity-3 groups orally present maps to the class; 30 minute presentation for each group
- IEP objectives
 - Communication-introduce members of the group and participate in oral report using communication device; Math-keep time for the group, notify group when time is up

- Support from special educator
 - Technical support
 - Program device
 - What level of adaptation is this?
 - Activity-same, similar, different?
 - Objectives-same different?
 - Setting-same, different?

- The Chime Institute
 - Chatsworth, CA

- Questions?
- Concerns?

- Contact info:

grcourta@email.uncc.edu