

# Severe Disabilities

## *Part 1: What to Teach*

### Facilitator's Guide



2014

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This Facilitator’s Guide is intended for use with the following resources:

- Presentation slides

These resources are available on the Course Enhancement Modules webpage of the CEEDAR Center website ([www.ceedar.org](http://www.ceedar.org)).

# **Introduction to the Severe Disabilities Course Enhancement Module**

The Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center developed this course enhancement module (CEM) on severe disabilities to assist faculty at institutions of higher education (IHEs) and professional development providers in the training and development of all educators. This CEM provides information and resources about how to prepare teacher and leader candidates or current practitioners to create effective instructional environments for all students, including students with disabilities and their nondisabled classmates.

Through this CEM, participants will learn how to plan instruction to provide students with severe disabilities opportunities to learn academic content linked to state standards as well as the social, daily living and job skills needed for life after high school. Participants will understand that students with severe developmental disabilities will also need some intensive, systematic instruction to learn priority content, but this can be embedded in the milieu of a general education classroom. Participants will learn about what to teach as well as how to teach through systematic instruction and best practices surrounding how to support students with severe disabilities in order to improve educational outcomes.

## **Purpose**

This CEM is designed to build the knowledge and capacity of educators in the selected topic. The module can be adapted and is flexible to accommodate faculty and professional development provider needs. The anchor presentation and speaker notes can be used in their entirety to cover multiple course or professional development sessions. Alternatively, specific content, activities, and handouts can be used individually to enhance existing course and/or professional development content.

## **Audience**

The audience is intended to be teacher and leader candidates within preservice programs at the undergraduate or graduate levels and/or district teachers and leaders participating in inservice professional learning opportunities. The facilitator's guide is designed as a blueprint to support faculty and professional development providers charged with providing teachers and leaders with training in a selected topic. The training can be conducted by faculty and by state and local professional development providers.

## Facilitator's Guide

The facilitator's guide consists of anchor presentation slides with a script to support facilitators as they present the content and learning activities within the anchor presentation. Facilitator's notes and talking points are included. The speaker notes are intended as a guide for a facilitator who is using the PowerPoint slides and may be modified as needed. Reviewing the entire guide prior to facilitating the training is highly recommended.

## Evidence Based

The topics and readings for this module were developed after a comprehensive review of research on teaching students with moderate and severe disabilities that was reviewed by multiple experts (also available through CEEDAR). Recommended practices were gleaned from the recommendations of experts in severe disabilities and cross-referenced with research literature. Existing literature reviews were utilized as well as individual studies. In general, Horner and colleagues (2005) criteria for Evidence-Based Practices were used to evaluate studies and subsequent recommendations. Thus, this module seeks to provide professionals with guidance based on the best of research and expert opinion.

## Two-Part Organization

The learning resources are organized into two parts:

- **Part 1: What to Teach.** This part is designed to provide a broad overview of the curricular priorities for students with moderate to severe developmental disabilities (e.g., intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorders). It offers a balanced view of teaching academic content aligned with Common Core State Standards along with other life skills priorities.

This part contains an anchor presentation entitled *Introduction to General Curriculum Access for Students with Severe Developmental Disabilities* as well as an additional presentation entitled *Foundations of Literacy*. The presentations can be used in isolation or to form a three-day intensive session. The first two presentations are provided as a starting point for a three-day intensive professional development session. Separate materials are provided to extend the PD for an additional four sessions and include the target objectives, activities, suggested participant materials and presenter background readings. Separate teacher and leader versions of the provided presentations can be located in the Course and PD Outlines section of this CEM.

A sample syllabus for a stand-alone course on curriculum for students with moderate and severe disabilities is available in the Course and PD Outlines section of this CEM. At the end of this syllabus, detailed guidance is provided for each session that can also be pulled into content courses (e.g., a course on Reading might use information from Sessions 2-4.)

- **Part 2: How to Teach.** This part is designed to provide a broad overview of teaching students with moderate and severe developmental disabilities (e.g., intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorders). The module includes information on instructional strategies, progress monitoring, assessment and selection of supports.

This part contains an anchor presentation entitled *Instructional Strategies, Supports, and Assessment for Students with Severe Disabilities* as well as additional presentations entitled *Assessment and Progress Monitoring for Students with Severe Disabilities* and *Prompting: Impact on Inferences about Student Learning*. These presentations are provided as a starting point for a three-day intensive professional development session. Separate materials are provided to extend the PD for an additional four sessions and include the target objectives, activities, suggested participant materials and presenter background readings. Separate teacher and leader versions of the provided presentations can be located in the Course and PD Outlines section of this CEM.

A sample syllabus for a stand-alone course on instructional methods for students with severe disabilities is available in the Course and PD Outlines section of this CEM. At the end of the syllabus, detailed guidance is provided for each session that can be pulled into content courses.

## Opportunity to Learn

Learning activities are embedded throughout each part of the anchor presentations. In addition, specific activity descriptions are also provided for the professional development extension sessions as well as for each class session for the two stand-alone courses. All activities are optional and may be adapted to meet the needs of a particular audience.

## Resources

The following resources are provided for use in delivering the anchor presentation for Part 1:

- Facilitator’s guide (this document)
- Presentations

All of these materials may be used and adapted to fit the needs of the training context. To cite the content, please use the following statement: “These materials have been adapted in whole or in part with permission from the CEEDAR Center.”

## Materials

The following materials are recommended for training and associated activities:

- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Pens at each table
- One song from each decade from the 70’s, 80’s, 90’s and now (e.g., downloaded from iTunes)

- Anchor Presentation PowerPoint
- Apples (optional)
- Access to website to view CCSS and to upload video
- Timer

Needed materials will vary based on the content and activities selected, which will depend on the audience and the format of the course or professional development session.

### **In This Guide**

The rest of the guide provides the speaker's notes to support facilitators as they present the content and learning activities included in Part 1 of this anchor presentation. Reviewing the entire guide prior to facilitating the training is highly recommended.

# Speaker Notes

**Slide 1-Introduction to General Curriculum Access for Students with Severe Developmental Disabilities**



**Introduction to General Curriculum Access for Students with Severe Developmental Disabilities**

Developed by Diane Browder, Leah Wood, Caryn Allison, and Cecelia Ribuffo for CEEDAR

What to Teach Students with Severe Disabilities

U.S. Department of  
Education,  
H325A120003



U.S. Office of Special Education Programs

## Slide 2–Session One Objectives

(Read the objectives for the session).

## Session One Objectives

- ❖ Define access and learning in the general curriculum
- ❖ Discuss Jackson, Ryndak, and Wehmeyer's (2009) three components of inclusion
- ❖ Write an objective that aligns to a Common Core State Standard for a student with severe disability
- ❖ Describe need for balance between standards-based instruction and functional life skills.



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## Slide 3– Terminology

What do you notice about each of these terms? (All begin with “student with...”). By saying “student with” rather than “the disabled” we put the person first. We use person-first language. Mark Twain once said that language is important; like the difference between saying “lightening” and “lightening bug.” There are some different terms used for students with severe disabilities. The first term, students with significant cognitive disabilities, is a term that was introduced in legislation like NCLB and IDEA when referring to students who take alternate assessments. It is not actually a category of disability in IDEA. The term “intellectual disability” replaces the older term “mental retardation” and is found in IDEA as is “autism spectrum disorders”. Sometimes the broader term “developmental disabilities” is used to be inclusive of both ASD and ID. Similarly, some people use the term “severe disabilities” to be inclusive of both moderate and severe developmental disabilities. In this presentation, I will use this last term to refer to students with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders combined with intellectual disability. Some people use the term “low functioning” autism to refer to

## Terminology

- ❖ Students with significant cognitive disabilities
  - Term in NCLB/ IDEA legislation per AA
- ❖ Student with intellectual disability
  - Replaced mental retardation
- ❖ Student with autism spectrum disorders
- ❖ Student with developmental disabilities
  - Inclusive of autism & ID
- ❖ Student with severe disabilities
  - Shorthand used here for moderate and severe developmental disabilities



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this latter group, but I don't think that promotes high expectations for students' learning so will not use that term.

#### Slide 4 – General Learning Characteristics

The general learning characteristics of students with severe disabilities influence instructional strategies and support. It is important not to overgeneralize, but most students will have some learning difficulties. Students with severe disabilities tend to learn more slowly and less. They also tend to have difficulty with generalizing information (among different people, materials, times and places) or applying what they learned in one situation to another. Lastly, putting together component parts requires the ability to combine skills. Thus, a focus on specific instruction is necessary with skills taught in clusters.

## General Learning Characteristics

1. Learn much more slowly
2. Learn a lot less
3. Difficulty generalizing information
4. Difficulty maintaining information
5. Difficulty putting together component parts

### Slide 5 – Severe Disabilities Definition

TASH (formerly The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps) is a professional organization that advocates for inclusion and human rights for individuals with severe disabilities. This conceptualization of students with severe disabilities is easy to understand and remember. The organization publishes a journal entitled *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities* which informs practice.

## Severe Disabilities Definition

✧ TASH: “Require extensive ongoing support in more than one major life activity....Support may be required for life activities such as mobility, communication, self-care, and learning.....”

(Adopted by TASH, December 1985, revised November 1985; reprinted in Meyer, Peck, & Brown, 1991, p.19)



### Slide 6–General Curriculum- the target of learning for ALL students

Who is in the general curriculum? Sometimes there seems to be confusion about that and professionals will talk about students in the general curriculum or not. Actually, all students should have access to the general curriculum. There are no students who are NOT in the general curriculum. The difference is that some students will access general curriculum with adaptations.

## General Curriculum- the target of learning for ALL students



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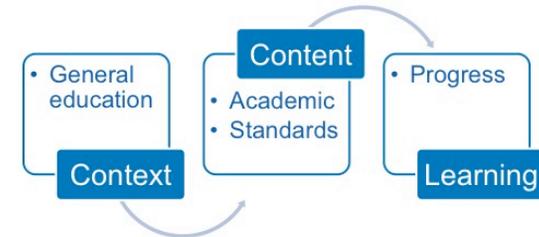


### Slide 7—General Curriculum Access

Jackson, Ryndak, and Wehmer wrote a landmark article in which they proposed that there are three components to general curriculum. The first is the context which is the general education setting. The second is the content which is what all students learn in the school. Outcomes for all students learning are articulated as state standards. The third aspect of access is learning. Let's talk more about each of these components.

## General Curriculum Access

Jackson, L.B., Ryndak, D.L., & Wehmeyer, M.L. (2008-2009). The dynamic relationship between context, curriculum, and student learning: A case for inclusive education as a research-based practice. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 33-4, 175-195.



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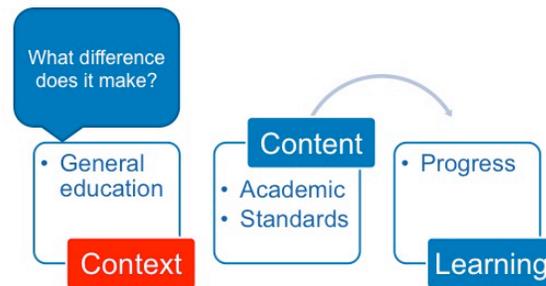


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### Slide 8—Let's talk about... context

First let's talk about the context where access to general curriculum content takes place.

## Let's talk about... context



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### Slide 9–Access through Context

Some experts argue that access to general curriculum can only occur in general education classes. That certainly should be the goal for all students. We know that the current reality is that many students are served in self-contained classrooms. We need more teamwork to develop inclusive schools.

### Slide 10–General Education Inclusion

The general education teacher has the greatest knowledge of the content. Through collaboration, the special education provides the adaptations needed to foster learning. In a future session, we'll talk more about how the teaching team can work together to create universally-designed instruction that promotes learning for all students. While students can learn the general curriculum content in any special education context, our goal should be to promote learning in general education classes because this is where access is most fully available.

## Access through Context

- ❖ **Goal:** Students with severe disabilities learn general curriculum content with typical peers in general education class using any needed supports
- ❖ **How to Get There-**
  - Advocate for inclusive schools
  - Develop strategies for inclusive instruction
- ❖ **Reality:** Most special education teachers of students with severe disabilities provide services in self-contained classrooms.



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## General Education Inclusion

- ❖ **Why the context of the general education class?**
  - Full educational opportunity
  - Access to general education teacher's content knowledge
  - Full membership in the school



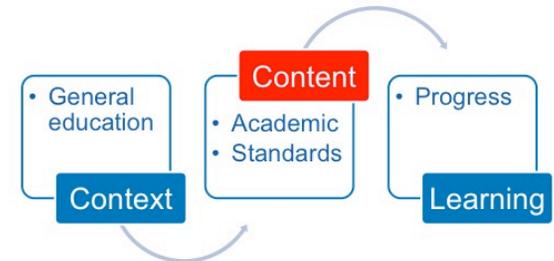
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### Slide 11—Let's talk about... content

It only is recently that educators began to realize that students with severe disabilities can learn the academic content of their assigned grades. Let's take a minute to walk down memory lane to look at how expectations for what students learned have changed over the decades.

## Let's talk about...content



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### Slide 12—Activity

Songs trends change with time and this holds true with education as well. Curricular expectations have changed for students with severe disabilities as a result of laws, changes in philosophical beliefs as well as research developments. We will now focus a bit on these changes in curricular expectations over time.

## Activity

- ✧ Listen to songs played
- ✧ Clap when it is the decade you started teaching



### Slide 13—Changing Curricular Context for Students with Significant Disabilities

It's the 1970s and students with severe disabilities received the right to a free appropriate, public education in 1975. As school programs were formed, there were no curricular models. Educators began planning for students with severe disabilities by considering their “mental age” based on developmental checklists. For example, if a student were considered at the 6<sup>th</sup> month level, planning would be similar to that for an infant even if for a student 12 years old! Although educators’ intentions were to meet the students’ individual needs, they soon realized that this type of planning would not reach the end goal of preparing students to someday function in the real world. It was not “functional”. Instead, it was treating them as infants for life.

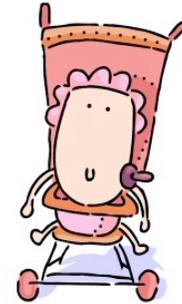
### Slide 14—1980s – Focus on Functional Skills

The criterion of ultimate functioning, first articulated by Lou Brown and his colleagues, was that students should be taught skills that met the criterion of preparing them ultimately to function in community environments. Earlier developmental models, focused on early childhood skills, were rejected in favor of instruction that was based on a student’s chronological age. These were considered “age-appropriate” skills. As this new awareness of the need for functional, age-appropriate skills dawned, educators began to create functional curriculum guides.

### Changing Curricular Context for Students with Significant Disabilities

#### 1970s – Developmental Focus

- Instruction was based on “mental age”
- Adapted infant/early childhood curriculum for students of all ages
- Limitation: not age appropriate and not functional for older students



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### 1980s – Focus on Functional Skills

- Criterion of Ultimate Functioning Applied
- Rejected the “developmental model”
- Instruction based on chronological age and “age appropriate” skills
- Functional, life skills curriculum emerged



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**Slide 15–Limitation of functional ONLY focus:**

Functional, age appropriate skills continue to be important for all students, but especially for those with severe disabilities who need to acquire increased independence in their homes and community. BUT, the problem educators realized is that functional skills alone were not enough. For students to attend school and never have the opportunity to learn to read or do math fell short of a full educational opportunity. Also, separate functional curriculum also promoted separating students with severe disabilities from their peers who were learning academic content.

**Limitation of functional ONLY focus:**

- ❖ Where's the academics?
- ❖ DO teach functional life skills, but not ONLY functional skills!!



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**Slide 16–1990s – Focus on Social Inclusion and Self-Determination**

By the 1990s, educators were questioning separate settings for students with severe disabilities and began promoting inclusion. In the early years of inclusion in general education class, the focus was mostly on promoting social skills. Students sometimes also worked on functional IEP objectives while other students did their academic work. But this difference in curriculum once again created separation. Students in general education class were sometimes like an island in the sea working on skills like tying their shoes while everyone else learned how to add.

**1990s – Focus on Social Inclusion and Self-Determination**

- ❖ Instruction in general education settings, mostly for social skills
- ❖ Teaching choice making, goal setting
- ❖ Limitation: Students often instructed on different skills than their peers without disabilities (i.e., island in the sea)



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### Slide 17–CURRENT – Focus on General Curriculum Access

In recent years, there has been a strong move towards teaching students with severe disabilities the full range of academic content as defined in the state’s academic content standards. Often states will extend or prioritize these standards for students who take the alternate assessment. Students are not expected to achieve the full grade level expectations, but they are expected to make yearly progress on content that aligns with the state standards.

## CURRENT – Focus on General Curriculum Access

- ✧ Instruction on extended academic content standards
- ✧ Students expected to make yearly progress



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### Slide 18–Solely focusing on GCA can be limiting, too...

Of course, focusing only on general curriculum content just reverses the problem and tips the balance too far in the other direction. Students continue to need functional skills, social inclusion, opportunities for self determination, and other skills that may not be explicitly stated in the state’s standards.

## Solely focusing on GCA can be limiting, too . . .

Functional skills, inclusion, self-determination should also be promoted in planning for individual students



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### Slide 19–The Teacher’s Challenge is to Balance Priorities

As educators, the challenge is to find the balance. Students need to learn academic content that aligns with state standards. They also need opportunities to learn other priority skills. The IEP team should work together to plan this balance for each student.

## The Teacher’s Challenge is to Balance Priorities

### Academic Content Standards



### Other Priorities: Functional life skills, therapy, social skills



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### Slide 20–Thinking about the Content: Standards

I have been using the term “standards” as I talk about the content of general curriculum access. What are they? Well, they define what all students should achieve. Standards reflect the best thinking of curricular societies and national and state committees of experts in the content. For example, mathematics experts wrote the Common Core Standards in mathematics. Let’s take a few minutes and take a look at them. Here is the link for the Common Core State Standards (or use the link to your state’s standards if not CCSS). Let’s find the link for English Language Arts. Choose a grade level and look for a standard. (If participants have their own computers, let them look up a standard and read it aloud). Notice that they are arranged by content area and grade level. (If your state has extended standards, go to that link now.)

## Thinking about the Content: Standards

- ❖ Standards define the outcomes all students should achieve in their educational program
- ❖ Common Core State Standards
- ❖ Recommended by curricular societies and other national committees
- ❖ Developed and adopted by states
  - Defined for each content area
  - Defined by grade level

<http://corestandards.org>



### Slide 21–General Curriculum

So what is the general curriculum? It is the formal curriculum adopted by the state and LEA that is comprised of these standards for learning.

## General Curriculum

- ✧ Refers to the formal curriculum adopted by state and local education agencies
- ✧ Usually comprised of standards that are outcomes for student learning



### Slide 22–IDEA 1997

IDEA 1997 was the legislation that said all students should have access to the general curriculum content. It also required that all students be assessed on state standards, but alternate assessments could be used for students with significant cognitive disabilities who could not participate in the state assessment. Do you remember what state assessments you took in school? What was it called? How did you feel about it? Why would many students with severe disabilities need an alternative? The states design the alternate assessment.

## 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?*



### Slide 23–No Child Left Behind

While IDEA required students have alternate assessments of state standards, NCLB reinforced this requirement by making schools accountable for all students' learning in language arts, math, and science. This stimulated a lot of thinking about how to teach students with severe disabilities this core academic content.

## No Child Left Behind

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



### Slide 24–Why Academic Content?

Teaching state standards to students with severe disabilities has its critics. Some educators worry that students will miss out on functional life skills they might have learned. Here are four reasons why this academic learning is important. First, we do not know which students can learn the content until they have they are taught. Without a full educational opportunity, a student with severe disabilities who has the potential to learn science concepts or do algebra would never be able to show this potential. We also know from research on transition to adult living that the more academic skills students have the greater their job options and other quality of life. Also, academics can promote personal interests. Students can gain an interest in literature or develop a science hobby.

## Why Academic Content?

- ❖ Full educational opportunity
- ❖ We do not know what students can learn until we provide effective instruction
- ❖ Promote job and other community opportunities (more options with academic skills)
- ❖ Promote hobbies and personal interests



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### Slide 25–Check for Understanding

Teaching state standards to students with severe disabilities has its critics. Okay. Your turn. What will students be learning in general curriculum? (check to see if they give examples of language arts, math, science, social studies).

## Check for Understanding

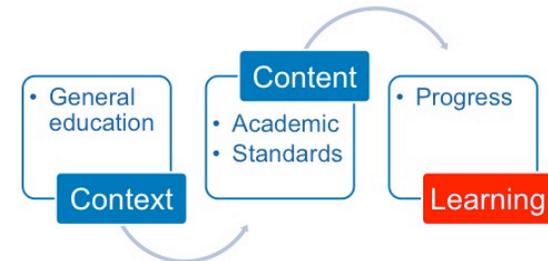
✧ What is general curriculum content? (name some things students will be learning)



### Slide 26–Let's talk about... learning

Content is important to access to general curriculum, but it's not enough. What would it look like if the student had superb content, but no learning? (Talk about this a few minutes; it would just be for "show" that students would be in front of materials that had no meaning to them; no learning would occur).

## Let's talk about...learning



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### Slide 27—Let's Think about Learning

To get learning, we have to use effective teaching practices. We have these effective practices from research showing that when an intervention was implemented, students showed progress. In schools, we need to build on this research on effective interventions. What would be the advantage of using a teaching method that has been proven to work? (Wait for answers like it saves time; students make more progress).

### Slide 28—Is there evidence Ss with SCD can learn content aligned with specific grade-aligned standards?

There is emerging research that students with severe disabilities can learn content that aligns with their grade level. Here are several examples.

## Let's Think about Learning

### Evidence-based practice

- ✧ Using effective, research based strategies to promote learning



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## Is there evidence Ss with SCD can learn content aligned with specific grade-aligned standards?

Browder, D.M., Jimenez, B., & Trela, K. (2012). Grade-aligned math instruction for secondary students with moderate intellectual disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 47,373-388.

Browder, D. M., Trela, K., Courtade, G. R., Jimenez, B. A., Knight, V., & Flowers, C. (2012). Teaching mathematics and science standards to students with moderate and severe developmental disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education*. 46, 26-35.

Courtade, G., Browder, D.M., Spooner, F.H., & DiBiase, W. (2010). Training teachers to use an inquiry-based task analysis to teach science to students with moderate and severe disabilities. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities*, 45, 378-399.

Jimenez, B.A, Browder, D.M, & Courtade, G.R. (2008). Teaching algebra to students with moderate cognitive disabilities. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities*, 43, 266-274.

Browder, D. M., Trela, K., & Jimenez, B. A. (2007). Training teachers to follow a task analysis to engage middle school students with moderate and severe developmental disabilities in grade-appropriate literature. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 22, 206-219.



## Slide 29– What about Students like Michael?

In addition to applying research, we promote learning by working with an educational team. Let's consider the very tough case of Michael. When he begins the school year, at the age of 10, he has only slight movement of one hand. He is legally blind and has no communication system. That is, he does not talk or use picture symbols or signs or any other means of symbolic communication. In fact, his responses are inconsistent. It would be easy to assume that Michael is not learning the academic content because he has no way to show what he knows, but that would be unfair to Michael. Instead, we work together with a team- the general and special education teachers, speech therapist, and occupational therapist to plan ways for Michael to communicate. We begin by finding a response mode for Michael. Maybe he can hit a switch with his forearm or some other body part. We use AT- assistive technology and introduce some symbols. For example, maybe he moves his forearm to hit a switch to select the picture that tells what a story is about. We also honor his nonsymbolic communication. For example, if Michael leans towards the teachers and tries to move his arm when she asks a question, she will move to him to see if she can help him answer. The teacher can use all of Michael's abilities. She might help him engage with a story by using his sense of smell or touch. She might also use animate read-alouds with sensory input. When reading about an apple, she might have an apple for Michael to taste, smell, and feel. She might add in surprises to keep him engaged with the story like simulating the wind with a fan. These are just examples of the kinds of ideas the team might brainstorm for Michael.

## What About Students like Michael?

### Michael has many challenges

- ❖ Quadriplegic with only slight strength/ movement in one forearm
- ❖ Legally blind
- ❖ No current symbolic communication system
- ❖ Does not show consistent responses

### Team Planning

- ❖ Find a response mode
- ❖ Use AT for symbols but also nonsymbolic communication
- ❖ Use all students abilities (e.g., for Michael-sense of smell, hearing, feeling)
- ❖ Begin with animated read-alouds with sensory input and surprises



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### Slide 30–Why Academic Content for Students Like Michael?

When the team plans for how Michael can show what he knows, they make a “least dangerous assumption” that Michael can learn.

## Why Academic Content for Students Like Michael?

- ✧ Least dangerous assumption; we do not know what Michael perceives because he cannot yet tell or show us
- ✧ Enriching Michael’s world with new experiences and knowledge



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### Slide 31–Video

Now we will look at a 3 minute interesting video from UNICEF on inclusion worldwide. Pay attention to the following things as you are watching the video: 1) Relevance of inclusion worldwide and 2) What components of general curriculum access the video emphasizes (content, context, or learning)?

## Video

- ✧ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-U-PoehEIH0>.
- ✧ Pay attention to:
  - Relevance of inclusion worldwide
  - What components of general curriculum access the video emphasizes (content, context, or learning)?



### Slide 32–The Least Dangerous Assumption

Anne Donnellan introduced the term “least dangerous assumption”. (Read the quote). What does this mean to you? Can you give me an example of a dangerous assumption about Michael? (e.g., because he is blind, he won’t be able to engage with books).

## The Least Dangerous Assumption

◇ In 1984, Anne Donnellan, a special education researcher, wrote the criterion of least dangerous assumption

*“In the absence of conclusive data, educational decisions ought to be based on assumptions which, if incorrect, will have the least dangerous effect on the likelihood that students will be able to function independently as adults.”*



### Slide 33–The Least Dangerous Assumption

Cheryl Jorgensen reinforced this concept. She adds that we should question the quality of instruction before assuming a student cannot learn.

Jorgensen, C (2005). The least dangerous assumption: A challenge to create a new paradigm. Disability Solutions, 6 (3), 1, 5-9.

## The Least Dangerous Assumption



*“If a student does not learn, the quality of the instruction should be questioned before the student’s ability to learn.”*

*Cheryl Jorgensen (2005)*



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### Slide 34—An Alignment Problem

Now that we have a firm understanding of what access is, let's talk more about how the content aligns with state standards. Take a minute and try to solve this dilemma. (Having participants brainstorm how to "adapt" an apple gives them the concept of adapting for accessibility. When they finish, talk about why apple flavored gum or candy or an apple flavored fruit drink with no real juice would not "align." Their goal this class is to know how to extend CCSS without losing their alignment, or that is, the "real" apple quality.)

## An Alignment Problem

Lindsey wants her children to have at least 5 fruits or vegetables daily. Lindsey herself eats an apple each day as one of her five. How can she "adapt" her apple to make it "accessible" for her children?  
-Her 10 year old needs something that won't rot in her bookbag if she forgets to eat it  
-Her 6 year old lost her front teeth and cannot bite  
-Her 5 year old has a swallowing disorder and can't drink liquids unless they are thickened



The CHALLENGE: It has to "align" with a real apple



### Slide 35—Common Core State Standards

(Before presenting, check to make sure whether your state has adopted the Common Core. If not, you may want to substitute your state's standards on these slides.)

Earlier we located the Common Core State Standards. Just to review, these are the outcomes all learners should achieve and for which schools are accountable. Most states have now adopted the CCSS. Here is an example of a standard from the 4th grade.

## Common Core State Standards

- ◇ Statements of outcomes all learners should achieve
  - ◇ Schools are accountable for students learning the standards
  - ◇ Most states have adopted the CCSS
- ◇ Example
    - Writing 4<sup>th</sup> Grade
      - Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences



### Slide 36–Where to Find Common Core State Standards

(This is where the CCSS starts becoming real for the students. Have them log on to each site, select a grade level, and read the standard they find to the class. They should write one of the two down for the next activity.)

## Where to Find Common Core State Standards

- ❖ Become familiar with state standards
  - Common Core State Standards-English Language Arts
    - <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards>
  - Common Core State Standards-Mathematics
    - <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/mathematics>



### Slide 37–Common Core in ELA

(For the next few slides, scan the CCSS to show these categories...or have students do so on their computers.)

## Common Core in ELA

- ❖ Reading: Standards for Literature
  - Key ideas and details
  - Craft and structure
  - Integration of knowledge and ideas
  - Range of reading/level of text comprehension
- ❖ Reading: Standards for Informational Text
  - Same subcategories as above



### Slide 38–Common Core in ELA (continued)

(Continue locating CCSS on the website).

## Common Core in ELA (continued)

- ✧ Speaking and Listening:  
communication & collaboration;  
presentation of knowledge & ideas
- ✧ Conventions of Language:  
conventions of standard English,  
knowledge of language, vocabulary  
acquisition and use



### Slide 39–An Alignment Problem

Now that we have a firm understanding of what access is, let's talk more about how the content aligns with state standards. Take a minute and try to solve this dilemma. (Having participants brainstorm how to “adapt” an apple gives them the concept of adapting for accessibility. When they finish, talk about why apple flavored gum or candy or an apple flavored fruit drink with no real juice would not “align.” Their goal this class is to know how to extend CCSS without losing their alignment, or that is, the “real” apple quality.)

## Common Core: 6-8 Math

- ✧ Counting & cardinality (K only)
- ✧ Operations and algebraic thinking (K-5)
- ✧ Numbers and operations in base 10 (K-5)
- ✧ Numbers and operations fractions (3-5)
- ✧ Measurement and data (K-5)
- ✧ Geometry (K-8)
- ✧ Ratios and proportional relationships (6-8)



### Slide 40–Making the Standards Accessible

Similar to our apple example, students with severe disabilities need to have the standard made accessible...but without losing its original essence.

## Making the Standards Accessible



- ✧ If students cannot achieve at or near grade level
  - Target alternate achievement
    - “A bite of the apple”
      - Or “applesauce”



### Slide 41–States Use a Variety of Ways to Make Standards Accessible

There are a variety of ways to make standards accessible. You may prioritize some subset of the standards rather than teaching them all. You also can pinpoint a portion within a long complex standard. You may simplify the standard by focusing on an easier version of the skill or task analyze a sequence of skills to reach this standard. Now, it's your turn. What do you need to do make the standard you selected accessible?

## States Use a Variety of Ways to Make Standards Accessible

- ✧ Prioritize
  - Teach a portion of the standards
- ✧ Pinpoint
  - Teach a portion of teach standard
- ✧ Simplify
  - An extension of the standards
- ✧ Task Analyze
  - Skill sequences
- ✧ For the standard you selected
  - Would you teach this standard?
  - Would you teach all of it or some of it?
  - Does it need to be simplified? How?
  - Are there skills to teach before/ after this? What?



### Slide 42–Alignment: Does the Objective Match the Standard?

Let’s talk about alignment of the objective you wrote to the CCSS. Does it match the original? Think about both the performance and the content. Look at the example (read the standard). Now, let’s notice its content and performance expectations. Look at this first objective. Camilla really is only activating a switch. We don’t know if she understands the content. The story might also miss the point about the forces like wind or rain that shape the landforms. In the second objective, she is focused on this critical content- the forces that shape the landform. But she still is not expected to identify or analyze these forces as they relate to the landforms. Notice how closely the last objective matches the original. This is a stronger link.

### Alignment: Does the Objective Match the Standard?

- ◇ Science Standard:
    - Identify and analyze forces that cause change in landforms over time
  - ◇ Content
    - Forces that shape landforms
  - ◇ Performance
    - Identify and analyze
- ◇ *Camilla will activate switch to listen to a science story about landforms.*
    - Content? **No**
    - Performance? **No**
  - ◇ *Camilla will use pictures to identify forces (wind, water, ice)*
    - Content? **Yes**
    - Performance? **Some**
  - ◇ *Camilla will select force and match with landform change (picture, model)*
    - Content? **Yes**
    - Performance? **Stronger link**



### Slide 43–Summary

(Give participants time to answer these and then discuss the answers)

Who should access the general curriculum? (all students including those with severe disabilities)

A least dangerous assumption...” (all students can learn academic content)

Access has 3 components (content, learning, context)  
Functional skills ARE still important.

### Summary

- ◇ Who should access the general curriculum?
- ◇ What is a least dangerous assumption about students with severe disabilities and academics?
- ◇ What are the components of access?
- ◇ Are functional skills still important?



What to Teach Students with Severe Disabilities



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