

Community-Based Instruction (CBI) as a Component of a Successful Transition Plan for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract

This research study used a student-focused questionnaire to gain understanding about high school students with intellectual disabilities who participate in community-based instruction (CBI) as a component of their transition planning. The participating students have intellectual disabilities, range in age from 16-years-old to 22-years-old, and attend a public school for students with special needs. The survey used descriptive statistics to quantify students' responses within five sub-domains (*constructs*) which were categorized as program satisfaction, learning, self-esteem, independent functioning, and social skills.

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This research study used a student-focused questionnaire to gain understanding about high school students with intellectual disabilities who participate in community-based instruction (CBI) as a component of their transition planning. These students range in age from 16-years-old to 22-years-old and all attend an urban, public school in Florida for students with special needs. The CBI program currently serves 91 students on a weekly basis. The program participates with a host of community employers in the industries of food and beverage, hotel hospitality, maintenance and custodial, shipping and receiving, and retail. Each student typically participates in CBI an average of two days per week.

CBI is an important component of transition planning. Project 10 (2011) suggested that CBI is an effective instructional method for teaching skills (*to students with special needs*) needed for functional daily living as productive adults. Transition planning is a required component (by age 16) of a disabled student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). The U.S. Department of Education (2007) mandated the following regarding transition services:

The term "transition services" means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:
Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment); continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate,

acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.[34 CFR 300.43 (a)] [20 U.S.C.1401(34)] (para. 4)

This definition of transition purports CBI as a critical opportunity for students with intellectual disabilities to practice vocational skills and daily living skills needed to successfully participate in the community.

The Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project (n.d.) suggested that CBI increases appropriate social and community behaviors (*decrease of self-stimulatory, ritualistic, anti-social behaviors*) and work habits for students with disabilities. Their study also implied that students learn skills in CBI that are critical to the individual's independent functioning within the community. CBI was accredited with increasing community mobility and orientation and typically reinforces age appropriate social skills necessary to complete community transactions. CBI experiences also contribute to the development of skills and work habits appropriate to sheltered and/or un-sheltered employment settings. CBI is individualized to meet the particular needs of each student with a disability related to the student's specific IEP goals and objectives. The Phoenix Day school for the Deaf (n.d.) identified four CBI domains:

- a. Domestic – self care and grooming, wellness, nutrition, cooking, laundry, housekeeping, b. Vocational – career exploration, employability skills, instructions, rules, schedules, c. Community – transportation, libraries, shopping, post office, restaurants, and d. Recreation and Leisure – crafts, games, parks, YMCA, bowling, golfing, movies, amusement parks (para. 3).

CBI, in this writer's belief is role-playing at the next level of realization. Classroom teachers often use role-playing scenarios to build skills, on task behavior, and cooperative work practices in many of the previously mentioned areas (domestic, vocational, community, recreation and leisure). CBI offers the same instructional methodology but within the applied setting, rather than the classroom. CBI should not replace the role-playing activities created in classroom settings, but enhance these learning activities by providing opportunities to further practice these skill sets with non-disabled members of the community. This ideology correlates with normalization theory. Normalization implies, "as much as possible, the use of culturally valued means in order to enable, establish, and/or maintain valued social roles for people" (Wolfensberger & Tullman, 1982, p. 131). This theory expounds constructs that are pertinent to building social networks within the community as well as maintaining relationships with peers in the community setting. Normalization theory concludes that when a person's social role is valued within a setting, other desirable outcomes will be "accorded that person within the resources and norms of his or her society" (Wolfensberger & Tullman, p. 131). A disabled person's consideration as a valued and equal part of the community is a mandatory premise to equal treatment, respect, and adequate access to social opportunities (Dubberly, 2011).

Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma (1951) described a theory of occupational decision making. Their occupational decision-making theory suggested that children and young adults consider their occupation in an evolving ideal from an initial fantasy stage based on the glamour and excitement of the job, which progresses to the tentative stage

where they begin to think about their interests and personal capacities, and eventually to the realistic stage where an appraisal of various fields is made to decide what an occupation can realistically offer. CBI is likely an important conduit in this process for students with intellectual disabilities. Longitudinal study has shown that people with intellectual disability typically have reduced employment opportunities (Taylor, 2004). CBI provides these students with disabilities the opportunity to train and work in a variety of “realistic” job fields. The CBI opportunities offer students the chance to explore, shadow, and eventually train in preferred job settings. CBI offers younger students opportunities to evaluate different work settings and make determinations if the job tasks are preferable and doable. This likely helps the student progress through the mental evolution to the tentative phase of occupational choice. Students ideally participate in CBI for a number of years throughout their secondary school career. As a student gains experience in CBI, more realistic views of what each job entails should begin to form and coincide with a better understanding of one’s personal capacity to master the job. This evolutionary process seems to define the transition ideology of disorientation to reorientation in new settings or with new life events (Kochlar-Bryant, Bassett, Webb, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

This study was intended to provide high school students with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to provide input on how the CBI program benefits them in five areas related to successful transition from high school. The guiding constructs were categorized as satisfaction with the CBI program, learning, self-esteem, independent functioning, and social skills. These constructs correlate with the students’ Individual Education Plan (IEP) domains of independent functioning, vocational, academic, and social emotional. The construct of program satisfaction is correlated to overall school satisfaction and student retention. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) created language in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) [34 CFR 300.157(a)(3)] [20 U.S.C. 1412 (a)(15)(A)iii] to specifically address performance goals and indicators that address graduation rates and dropout rates. The indicators for the compliance and effectiveness of a State’s implementation of the IDEA in the area of transition are Indicator 1: Graduation Rates, Indicator 2: Dropout Rate, Indicator 13: Post School Transition Goals in the IEP, and Indicator 14: Participation in Post Secondary Settings.

The results of this study were compiled to guide future CBI opportunities and develop instruction within the community settings that correlates with students’ goals and interest. It is paramount to understand how students with intellectual disabilities perceive the community-based instruction program as a component of their post-school transition plan.

Educators are fighting an ongoing battle to lower the dropout rate of students with disabilities. The National High School Center (2007) reported “Students with disabilities drop out of school at significantly higher rates than their peers who do not have disabilities. In the 2001–02 school year, only 51 percent of students with disabilities exited school with a standard diploma” (p. 1). All high school students, including

students with disabilities need to perceive school attendance as a productive activity geared toward future successes. This was the precedence to define the constructs selected for this study. This study asserts CBI as a vehicle that promotes successful transition from high school for students with intellectual disabilities. It is outstanding for educators to see the value in their educational program, but this can only translate to success if students also perceive the program as beneficial and personally relevant.

Method

Participants

A survey design was used with a written questionnaire instrument serving as the data collection tool. The participants for this study were 45 students who were randomly selected from 91 students who have participated in CBI during the school year. Out of the 45 randomly selected students, 9 students selected to not participate in the study, which left a total of 36 participating students. The students consisted of 20 male students and 16 female students. All students have been staffed into Exceptional Education Student Services for having an intellectual disability ($IQ > 70$), but some students also have a dual disability status of either deafness, hard of hearing, physical disabilities, low vision, or other health impairments.

Procedure

The study used descriptive statistics to analyze data collected by the questionnaire tool. This methodology was chosen to quantify student responses that can demonstrate patterns and elucidate areas of need. The content validity of the survey was determined by two methods. A pilot test was conducted to gauge the content validity of the survey prior to implementation. Six teachers who work with the students with intellectual disabilities were selected to analyze the survey and provide preliminary feedback for improvements. The pilot test participants results were analyzed, as well as any comments and suggestions made toward the improvement of the data collection tool. The survey was analyzed for content, comprehension, and reliability by an expert panel of three special education administrators. The special education administrators consisted of (a) a principal with decades of experience working with students with disabilities (b) an assistant principal with decades of experience working with students with disabilities, and (c) a regional instructional program support person for students with disabilities. This expert panel of reviewers was used to determine (a) if the survey contained any biased language, (b) if the language was easily understandable, (c) if the reading level of the material was appropriate for the group to be studied, and (d) to ascertain if the items listed on the survey were related to the construct intended for study. The results from the completion of the pilot test and review panel processes provided input that several questions should be reworded based on word choice, grammar, and sentence lay out.

The survey was used to gather descriptive information about the perceptions and understanding of the defined population of students who participate in weekly CBI. The questionnaire used a simplified Likert Scale format to quantitatively collect data

(Appendix A). The five construct areas were statistically scored by median, mean, high-low response, and standard deviation. This data collection process was intended to provide data that represented the current state of the CBI program and answer the research questions featured below.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to hypothesize the students' beliefs about their participation in the CBI program. These research questions represent the five constructs (satisfaction, learning, self-esteem, independent functioning, and social skills) previously mentioned.

Research Question 1. Does CBI promote school satisfaction and therefore possibly have a positive effect on retention rates among these high school students with intellectual disabilities?

Research Question 2. Do these high school students with intellectual disabilities connect learning skills that are important to their personal success with their CBI activities?

Research Question 3. Do these high school students with intellectual disabilities believe that CBI builds their self-esteem and self-determination skills?

Research Question 4. Do these high school students with intellectual disabilities believe that CBI builds their independent functioning skills?

Research Question 5. Do these high school students with intellectual disabilities believe that CBI builds their social skills with intellectual disabilities?

Results

This study was conducted to provide an opportunity for students with intellectual disabilities to express their beliefs about participating in CBI. The study focused on five constructs which were satisfaction with the program, learning, self-esteem, independent functioning, and social skills. The five previously stated research questions were created to represent each construct area. The complexity of the Likert scale was reduced during the pilot study phase to accommodate cognitive ability of the students with intellectual disabilities. Typically, Likert scaling typically consist of 1 to 5 or 1 to 7 ratings for each question to measure the participants' level of agreement (Trochim, 2006). The simplified Likert scale format ranged from 1 = disagree, 2 = unsure, and 3 = agree. The simplified version of the scale likely creates a loss of richness in statistical findings and will be discussed in greater detail in the limitation section of this report.

Research Question 1 asked: Does CBI promote school satisfaction and therefore possibly have a positive effect on retention rates among these high school students with intellectual disabilities, which received a highly favorable response (Mean = 2.98) from the 36 participants of the study (see Appendix B). Questions 1 (Mean = 3.00) and 9 (Mean

= 3.00) received the highest affirmation (see Appendix A). These scores represent a highly favorable feeling of satisfaction about the CBI program in general.

Research Question 2 asked: Do these high school students with intellectual disabilities connect learning skills that are important to their personal success with their CBI activities received a favorable response (Mean = 2.89) from the 36 participants of the study (see Appendix B). This sub-domain (construct) received the overall lowest scores at of the five constructs. Question 12 (Mean = 2.72) received the overall lowest score from the participants (see Appendix A).

Research Question 3 asked: Do these high school students with intellectual disabilities believe that CBI builds their self-esteem and self-determination skills received a highly favorable response (Mean = 2.94) from the 36 participants of the study (see Appendix B). Question 8 (Mean = 2.97) received the highest affirmation (Appendix A). The students perceived CBI as an activity which is highly correlated with their self-esteem and ability to demonstrate self-determination.

Research Question 4 asked: Do these high school students with intellectual disabilities believe that CBI builds their independent functioning skills, received a highly favorable response (Mean = 2.97) from the 36 participants of the study (see Appendix B). Questions 2 (Mean = 2.94) and 19 (Mean = 2.94) equally received the highest affirmations (see Appendix A).

Research Question 5 asked: Do these high school students with intellectual disabilities believe that CBI builds their social skills with intellectual disabilities. The 36 participants indicated a highly favorable response (Mean = 2.96) to this construct (see Appendix B). Question 16 (Mean = 3.00) received the highest affirmation (see Appendix A).

Limitations

There are several important limitations that need to be considered. The study used a relatively small population group which consisted of only students participating in a CBI program at one high school. The students who made the sample selection of participants were randomly selected from the overall CBI population group. The overall cognitive level of the participating students likely creates several limitations that need to be considered as hindrances to the overall validity of the study. These students are not fluent readers and needed adult guidance to read and comprehend some of the survey questions. Some students were given verbal prompts to help them clarify questions. This interaction with the adult may have led to inflated affirmation responses in attempt to please the adult. Students were reminded to give their most honest answers, but this interaction must be considered as a potential cause of response bias.

The students' overall cognitive ability also influenced the answer scale used in the survey. The researcher believed from his work with these students over the last eight years that a typical Likert Scale response is too abstract for the students to comprehend. This consideration prompted the usage of the three answer scale, therefore deleting the

strongly disagree and strongly agree responses typically found in a five-point Likert Scale response. This change in the Likert Scale detracts from the quantitative richness of answers, and in-kind creates a simpler scale equal to yes, no or unsure.

The results of this single school study should not be over-generalized to students who have disabilities other than intellectual disabilities and may not easily apply to schools located in other geographical areas. This study was intended to evaluate and report these specific students' beliefs about their participation in the CBI program and should only be considered as a recommendation for further research on CBI programs.

Implications for Practice

This study was concerned with the effects that CBI has on these students with intellectual disabilities. Specifically, the study was intended to provide these students an opportunity to express their beliefs about their participation as it relates to the five aforementioned constructs. As previously described, poor transition outcomes and high dropout rates are major concerns for all students with disabilities. Data collected during the school year based on the 91 students who participated in CBI during the 2010-2011 school term indicated that 3.5% of these students dropped out of school during the year and 4.6% of the students had at least 20 absences during the school year. These are important considerations for determining the successful transition of students with special needs. Part B of the IDEA specifies four indicators for the compliance and effectiveness of a State's implementation of the IDEA in the area of transition for secondary-level students with disabilities. Indicator 1: Graduation Rates, Indicator 2: Dropout Rate, Indicator 13: Post School Transition Goals in the IEP, and Indicator 14: Participation in Post Secondary Settings (Project 10, Transition Education Network, 2011). These low dropout and student absence rates are another possible correlation of these students finding significance in their education.

The participating students in this study indicated an exceptionally high level of affirmation in all five of the construct areas. The construct of satisfaction was rated highest of all (mean = 2.981). This seems to indicate that the students are finding enjoyment and possibly educational meaning in their participation in the CBI program. CBI participation likely has a symbiotic effect in the community and school. Schargel and Smink (2001) reported positive results found at schools with high community interaction that included improved reading and math performance, better attendance rates, and a decrease in suspension rates and dropout rate. The community participants also gain understanding about people with special needs and typically become more willing to hire and work with people with special needs. National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (2011) suggested that schools need the support and help of the whole community. This organization recommended volunteers and funding as two major ways that communities support their schools. CBI is an example of a community partnership that shows the students that they are valued in the community and provides ample opportunity for community members to enrich the lives of students with special needs.

Although each construct area received overall affirming scores, the learning construct received the lowest affirming responses. Survey Question 12 - *I can practice skills that I have learned in class when I go to CBI*, received the lowest score of all questions. This was an area of concern that brought forth several questions. What instructional strategies need to be implemented to help CBI students relate what they learn in class to what they do in the community? Do the students specifically recognize the relationship of learning functional reading, functional math, and vocational skills as prerequisites to community success? Does a more thorough task analysis need to be conducted to better define how a community job task relates to classroom instruction? These are guiding questions for future research and considerations for educators to excogitate when implementing a CBI program in their school.

In conclusion, innovative approaches need further research and consideration to improve dropout rates and successful transition scenarios for students with intellectual disabilities. This writer contends that any program that keeps these students actively involved in school is beneficial and can serve as a stepping stone to increased school success. CBI was perceived by the students as a satisfying school program that overall correlated well with their IEP goals. More research is needed to continue to improve the CBI experience for these students and especially find ways to help these students see correlation between classroom learning and their community experiences.

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Appendix A

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics - Means and Standard Deviations for Individual Survey Question Responses on the Community-Based Instruction (CBI) Student Survey

Question SD	N	Min.	Max	Mean
1. I enjoy participating in CBI. .000	36	3	3	3.00
2. I learn skills in CBI that will help me get .232 a job after graduation.	36	2	3	2.94
3. I feel good (confident) about my ability to .319 work in a job.	36	2	3	2.89
4. I am learning how to dress properly for a job. .167	36	2	3	2.97
5. I am learning how to talk to adults who work .232 at the job site.	36	2	3	2.94
6. I am learning how to work with others to get .333 the job done.	36	1	3	2.94
7. In CBI, I am learning about different kinds of jobs. .368	36	1	3	2.92
8. Working in CBI makes me feel good about myself .167 (or my skills).	36	2	3	2.97
9. Working in CBI teaches me skills that I will need .000 after I graduate.	36	3	3	3.00
10. I feel good about my accomplishments in CBI. .232	36	2	3	2.94
11. CBI has taught me how to complete my work on time. .167	36	2	3	2.97
12. I can practice skills that I have learned in class when .615 I go to CBI.	36	1	3	2.72
13. I use my reading skills in CBI. .280	36	2	3	2.91
14. I learn to solve problems when I work in CBI. .319	36	2	3	2.89

15. I learn to use tools to get a job done when I .280 work in CBI.	36	2	3	2.92
16. CBI teaches me how to act when I am in .000 the community.	36	3	3	3.00
17. I learn steps to complete a job when I am at CBI. .000	36	3	3	3.00
18. In CBI, I learn how to work on my own .232 (independently).	36	2	3	2.94
19. I get to practice my skills in the real-world .333 when I am in CBI.	36	1	3	2.94
20. I want to continue to learn new skills in CBI. .333	36	1	3	2.94

Appendix B

Table 2

Medians, Means, and Standard Deviations for Responses to Construct Areas on the Community-Based Instruction (CBI) Student Survey

Question	Median	Mean	SD
Construct One – Satisfaction (Questions 1, 9, 20)	3	2.98	0.19
Construct Two – Learning (Questions 2, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19)	3	2.89	0.13
Construct Three – Self-Esteem (Questions 3, 8, 10)	3	2.94	0.14
Construct Four – Independent Functioning (Questions 4, 11, 17, 18)	3	2.97	0.10
Construct Five – Social Skills (Questions 5, 6, 16)	3	2.96	0.17

Note. 1 = Disagree; 2 = Unsure; 3 = Agree.

The Likert Scale format was reduced to a three number scale to simplify to complexity of answers to accommodate the students with intellectual disabilities. This constitutes the equivalent of yes, no, or unsure.