

curriculum modification:

making standards accessible for deaf students with disabilities

By Holly McBride and Matthew Goedecke



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Deaf students with significant disabilities face unique challenges with state standards and grade-level expectations. Their teachers, too, face unique challenges. Material making, breaking concepts and tasks down into component parts, providing time and motivational opportunities for developing background knowledge and foundational skills, and addressing generalization across environments are all things that must be carefully considered and planned for within limited instructional time for students with disabilities.

We spent a considerable amount of time looking for evidence-based practices that could be applied in our schools and recommended to others. While we found little research available on deaf students with disabilities and the general curriculum, what we did find were the recommended approaches and interventions that have shown evidence of success with other children with various types of disabilities (Moore & Martin, 2006; Spencer & Marschark, 2010). We should focus on the same knowledge and skills that the standards require for children without disabilities, but the instructional approach needs to be more explicit and intensive.

One valuable approach we found came from the Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky and outlined a clear four-step process for curriculum modification:

- 1.** Identify and link to the appropriate standards.
- 2.** Define the outcomes of instruction.
- 3.** Identify the instructional activities.
- 4.** Target specific objectives from the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Using this approach, teachers are able to analyze the standards, clarify intended outcomes, and design instruction that incorporates other best practices and strategy instruction, including project-based learning, priming background knowledge, teaching students to monitor their own comprehension, scaffolding instruction with prompts and cues, and collaborative group work (Jitendra, Burgess, & Gajira, 2011).

Photos by John T. Consoli



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My colleague Anna Rice (another middle school teacher) and I used this process each time we sat down to plan a unit. First, we looked at the standards required for the grade level and the thematic unit content. From there, we examined grade-level indicators and identified the foundational skills that were at the root of those indicators. We wanted our students to gain skills that would help them function more independently, in school, at home, and in the

community.

After identifying the set of skills that we would teach, we developed the activities that would enable the students to attain those skills. As we planned, we reviewed each student's IEP goals and objectives and discussed how those goals and objectives could be addressed within this unit. We also looked for links to tie our unit to alternate assessment (where applicable) so we could collect work samples and data for portfolio use.

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able to explain the concept of something that is unknown but could be understood with the help of evidence, information, or clues. According to Clayton, Burdge, Denham, Kleinert, and Kearns (p. 21, 2006), “Once the broad standard and the specific grade-level content standard are identified, it is then helpful to determine...the most basic concept that the standard defines.” For our students who needed substantial modification, the most basic concepts defined by these standards dealt with reading new vocabulary and using contextual clues and visualization to self-monitor comprehension. We also focused on learning to use webs as graphic organizers to make a plan for writing, especially for writing multiple sentence clues.

Our goal has become about interpreting the standards in a way that allows all students to achieve at their own highest level and being able to explain this to others.

Application

Objects, Goals, Skills—and Mystery!

Last year, we focused a unit for the English/Language Arts class on the theme of “mystery.” We used the University of Kentucky’s four-step process to analyze the standards, outcomes, activities, and objectives from the IEP. Here is what the process looked like:

STEP 1 - IDENTIFY THE APPROPRIATE STANDARDS.

We selected the following standards and indicators from the sixth-grade content standards:

- Vocabulary acquisition: Use context clues and text structures to determine the meaning of new vocabulary.
- Reading process: Use appropriate self-monitoring strategies for comprehension during the reading process.
- Writing process: Use graphic organizers and apply appropriate pre-writing tasks.

STEP 2 - DEFINE THE OUTCOMES OF INSTRUCTION.

We decided to focus on the essential components of what the concept of mystery represents. We wanted the students to be

STEP 3 - IDENTIFY INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES.

This step—our favorite part—allowed our passion for teaching to shine, and we could brainstorm and design activities that would excite and engage our students. We decided that the



Above: Students take off to hunt for clues during the mystery scavenger hunt.

culminating project for the mystery unit would be a scavenger hunt. To successfully arrive at this final product, we methodically broke down the work into all the component steps that would lead the students to the culminating project.

understand curriculum development. We see how students with disabilities fit within standards-based instruction. Our goal has become about interpreting the standards in a way that allows all students to achieve at their own highest level and being able to explain this to others.

STEP 4 - TARGET SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FROM THE IEP.

This step was easily integrated into our instruction as most of the students within this class have IEP goals related to acquiring vocabulary, visualizing text, using self-monitoring strategies during reading, planning for writing, and learning basic grammatical and writing conventions. We taught mini-lessons to the entire group and provided one-on-one support as needed to address specific IEP goals. Additionally, the IEPs helped us to determine the types and lengths of sentences we should expect from each student and the reading level that we should use to craft our teacher-created clues.

Reflection

When we looked for research, we were able to find the outline for a successful process for curriculum modification. When we focused on the standards at the beginning of planning rather than starting with the IEP goals and objectives, we were able to challenge students more than we had originally thought. Going through the steps repeatedly has also allowed us to better

Student Name: _____
Date: _____

Mystery: Scavenger Hunt

	4	3	2	1
WEB/WRITING ORGANIZATION	Student created 5 webs with at least 4 descriptions on each web.	Student created 3-4 webs and each web has 3 descriptions.	Student created 1-2 webs and each web has 2 descriptions.	Student did not create webs to organize their plan for writing.
USE OF VOCABULARY LISTS	Student used provided vocabulary lists at all times for assistance with spelling.	Student used provided vocabulary lists most of the time for assistance with spelling.	Student used provided vocabulary lists some of the time for assistance with spelling.	Student rarely used provided vocabulary lists for assistance with spelling.
COMPLETE SENTENCES	Clues are written in complete sentences following modeled sentence structures, initial capitalization, and final punctuation in each sentence without errors.	Clues are written in complete sentences following modeled sentence structures, initial capitalization, and final punctuation in each sentence with 1-2 errors.	Clues are written in complete sentences following modeled sentence structures, initial capitalization, and final punctuation in each sentence with 3-4 errors.	Clues are written in complete sentences following modeled sentence structures, initial capitalization, and final punctuation in each sentence with 5 or more errors.
VISUALIZING	Student demonstrated active visualization by "thinking aloud" after each clue (5 out of 5).	Student demonstrated active visualization by "thinking aloud" after most clues (4 out of 5).	Student demonstrated active visualization by "thinking aloud" after some clues (2 or 3 out of 5).	Student demonstrated active visualization by "thinking aloud" after few or no clues (0-1 out of 5 clues).

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