



**UPDATE February 2011**

**Assistive Technology can be used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. By using assistive technology in learning, teachers and parents can help students with special needs overcome their challenges and achieve their academic potential.**

**In this issue we will look at:**

- ☀ What curricula and instructional practices are currently used with students with low-incidence disabilities?**
- ☀ Product Information about new and researched programs and products available to use applications with the iPod touch and the iPad.**
- ☀ Featured Articles:**
  - **"Assistive technology: what every school leader should know"**
  - **"Assistive Technology for kids with LD: An overview"**
- ☀ Spotlight – The Family Center on Technology and Disabilities**
  - **"AT and the IEP"**
  - **FCTD - CD**
- ☀ What's New at the USIMAC**

### **CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES**

(The following are excerpts from the National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials/Learn/ "Curriculum Access for Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities: The Promise of UDL")

## ☀ Curriculum and Instructional Practices

Intended outcomes of the general curriculum for students with low-incidence disabilities do not differ essentially from those expected for all students.

State curriculum frameworks in core content areas, local content options, and district-level vision and mission statements about stakeholders' aspirations for students all drive the general curriculum. While specialized curricula and instructional practices must continue to be employed to address disability-specific needs, today the unique needs of students with disabilities must be understood in a broader context of the general curriculum.

Curriculum and instructional practices are not easily separated conceptually one from the other. In the present context, *curriculum* is treated as content and *instruction* is meant as those teaching practices that engage students in curriculum. While IDEA continues to classify students with disabilities according to category, in many instances curriculum and instructional practices can be applied more generically. Students with complex healthcare issues, significant developmental delays, and severe multiple disabilities require approaches that offer intensive levels of support. Students who are blind, deaf, deaf-blind, and autistic may in some cases require the same degree of support, but they also require more specialized curriculum and teaching approaches (in, for example, technology and literacy). Additionally, such students may require specialized resources from related service providers (such as orientation and mobility instructors or audiologists).

IEP teams today must begin with the presumption and high expectation that students with low-incidence disabilities can achieve state- and district-level standards (Wehmeyer, et al., 2002). Where special educators lack knowledge of curriculum content, they must

seek out colleagues from general education or participate in more structural or systemic approaches for curriculum collaboration (Pugach & Warger, 1996). Collaboration through a shared commitment among general and special education personnel on IEP teams is crucial to develop and implement a plan that will ensure access, participation, and progress with the general education curriculum (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000).

### ☀ **A Definition of Curriculum**

"A curriculum is a structured set of learning outcomes, or tasks, that educators usually call goals or objectives. Students are expected to learn the information specified in the curriculum so that they will have the skills needed to transition from childhood into adult life. Curriculum is intended to prepare students to succeed in society. Consequently, the material in the curriculum comes from someone's analysis of what society requires for success." (Howell and Nolet 2000)

Reduced to its simplest terms, curriculum provides the answer to the questions:

*What should students know?*

*What should students be able to do as they progress through school?*

### ☀ **Facing the Challenge of Curriculum Access**

The achievement gap observed between disabled and non-disabled student populations is troubling. Many of the students from poor families see this gap and feel there is a great disparity in quality from community to community. Standards-based reform and its reliance upon broad-scale assessment represents an attempt to improve overall performance of American students and to narrow the achievement gap observed in diverse student populations, including students with disabilities.

Some of these students will need the accommodations that accessible instructional materials have to offer in order to access the general curriculum in a mode of understanding they need to succeed. Others

will need alternate formats of the same information, e.g., Braille, large print, audio or digital. There are still others who will need accommodations that may change the curriculum in order to achieve progress, e.g., eye gaze, matching, turn taking skills that when developed lead them to better outcomes within the general curriculum.

### **Blending General and Specialized Curriculum**

How students with disabilities ultimately access the general curriculum depends on the assessment, planning, and evaluation skills of their local IEP team members (consisting of both general and special educators). They need to:

- Examine the content of what is taught to non-disabled peers
- Select entry points to the curriculum
- Determine appropriate accommodations for instruction and assessment
- Determine curriculum modifications and alternates for assessment.
- Determine what, if any, specially-designed instruction in expanded areas or domains of the curriculum is necessary to address needs arising from disability that also limit access to the general curriculum.

### **Blind/Low Vision**

Today, IDEA presumes that all students with IEPs who have vision impairments shall use Braille as their primary literacy medium unless the team determines that print is more efficient.

#### **Core Curriculum for Blind and Visually Impaired Children and Youths**

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##### **Existing Core Curriculum**

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English Language Arts

Mathematics

Other languages, to the extent possible

Science

Health  
Social Studies  
Business Education  
History

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**Expanded Core Curriculum**

Compensatory or functional academic skills, including communication modes\*

Social interaction skills

Recreation and leisure skills

Use of assistive technology (AT)

Physical Education  
Fine Arts  
Economics  
Vocational Education

Orientation and mobility

Independent living skills

Career education

Visual efficiency skills

 **Deafblind**

Students who are deaf-blind present a unique challenge to families, schools, and communities. Despite their designation, they represent an extremely heterogeneous population. Given their relatively small size in number, as well as their diversity, curriculum and instructional arrangements must remain flexible. Varying amounts of remaining vision, residual hearing, cognitive capacity, psychosocial status, and motor integrity all contribute to a complex set of needs.

The most important challenge for parents, caregivers, and teachers of students who are deaf-blind is meaningful communication, which can be thought of as a conversation; it uses body language, gestures, and both signed and spoken words.

 **Deaf/Hard of Hearing**

Controversy continues at the language level the core of human communication. On one side is the position that deafness is a difference and not a disability; Deafness is a culture with its own native language—American Sign Language (ASL). On the other side is the position that deafness is a disability, creating in an individual significant limitations in communicative competence; measures must be taken in order to compensate for these limitations.

In deaf education, three distinct communication approaches are identified for teaching the deaf and hard-of-hearing. These approaches are the bilingual-bicultural approach, the auditory-oral approach, and the total communication approach.

*Bilingual-Bicultural* - The position of the bilingual-bicultural approach is that ASL is the natural language of Deaf culture and that ASL should be the primary language choice for deaf students, with English considered a second language (Gargiulo 2003).

*Auditory-Oral* - The position of the auditory-oral approach is that students with hearing impairments can develop listening/receptive language and oral language expression skills. It emphasizes the use of residual hearing, amplification, and speech/language training.

*Total Communication* - the total communication approach is that simultaneous use of multiple communication techniques enhances an individual's ability to communicate, comprehend, and learn (Gargiulo, 2003).

### **Inclusion of Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities**

The following areas of concern can be explored in their own right as ways to include the student with low-incidence disabilities:

- Environmental concerns
- Adapted education methods
- Using technology
- Orientation and Mobility
- Individualized education
- Transition
- Inclusion in family

## **PRODUCT INFORMATION**

-  **CONNOVER Company** introduces 42 NEW Applications for the iPod touch. **CHECK THIS OUT ON LINE!**

You can use the popular iPod touch and iPad loaded with all of the videos from the **Functional Skills System** to teach and reinforce critical functional Life, social, math, literacy and work skills necessary for freedom and independence. This new mobile assistive technology tool can take your classroom instruction out into the community and increase independence.

There are 19 Functional Life Skills Programs, 3 Functional Math Skills programs, 7 Functional Literacy Skills programs, 6 Functional Social Skills programs, and 3 Functional Work Skills programs. They have an additional 4 Functional Skills Samplers that are free when you purchase the programs.

Here is the contact information:

The Conover Company

1-800-933-1933

[www.conovercompany.com](http://www.conovercompany.com)

[sales@conovercompany.com](mailto:sales@conovercompany.com)

### **FEATURED ARTICLES**

- ☀ **“Assistive technology: what every school leader should know”**
- ☀ **“Assistive Technology for kids with LD: An overview”**

### **SPOTLIGHT**

#### ☀ **The Family Center on Technology and Disabilities**

This is an excellent resource for teachers and parents. The information found here is useful and practical. There is an article on the FCTD and you will receive a CD about Assistive Technology as well.

- **“AT and the IEP”**
- **FCTD – CD**
- <http://www.fctd.info/>

## **WHAT'S GOING ON AT THE USIMAC?**

### **☀ The USIMAC is JUMPING!**

- The biggest thing happening right now is that we are gearing up for **APRIL 1, 2011!** We are anxious to receive your book orders so that we can start the process of production.
- Please remember that the Special Education Director's **signature** is required on all orders!
- The APH Census information will be gathered soon. Watch for this request in your mountain of mail!

*If you have a question contact Hollie Murdock, USIMAC Director*

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**??? QUESTIONS ???**

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