Functional Life Skills

Creating Appropriate Functional Goals Within a General Education Curriculum Framework

MARYLAND COALTION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, Inc.
2004
OLD Definition of Functional Skills

“Functional Skills refer to the variety of skills that are frequently demanded in natural domestic, vocational, and community environments.”

“Functional/critical skills… include skills/activities that are required or expected of non-handicapped peers. These skills are essential to the student’s performance and participation in a variety of community environments.

NEW Definition of Functional Skills

“…the definition of what is functional needs to be broadened to include science, art, music, history, English literature, and other subjects.”

“Learning history, geography, science, and math with classmates is functional and in the long-term best interests of all students, including those classified as having significant intellectual disabilities.”

“…skills such as communication, cooperation, problem solving, self-initiation, responsibility …have been shown to be more related to job stability than the ability to perform specific vocational tasks.”

“… the academic and social benefits of inclusion rely on students’ being full-time members of general education classes and their school communities.”

We need to consider skills that will allow students to participate in in-school and out-of-school activities with other students of the same age.
Criteria for Determining if Skills are Functional:

Educational goals on IEPs should:

____ reflect the general education curriculum (e.g., math, language arts, science, social studies, art, music, PE, or other academic subject)

____ be a communication skill or social behavior that will enhance the student’s ability to:
   ____ communicate what he or she knows
   ____ understand information
   ____ communicate socially with peers
   ____ participate with peers in and out of the classroom.

____ be a specific job skill identified as a real possibility for employment after school (if the student is age 14 or older)

____ be a skill that increases the student’s self-advocacy or participation as an independent learner in school

Criteria for selecting other skills as “functional” for the student should be:

1. Age-Appropriate
   Is the skill and the materials and methods used to teach the skill appropriate for the chronological age of the student?

2. Required now
   If the student does not perform the skill, will an adult or another person have to do it for him/her? Or is there an alternative to performing the task?

3. Required as an adult
   Will this be an important skill that will be required for community participation or for interactions with peers when the student is an adult?

4. Usefulness
   Will the student have the opportunity to use the skill in other places and at other times?

5. Student and Family Preference
   Does the student and the family want the student to learn and use this skill?

6. Enhancement of the Student’s Status
   Will this skill increase the student’s likelihood for:
   ____ increased social contacts/relationships
   ____ physical well-being
   ____ social status and appearance of competence?

7. Expands Community Participation
   Does the skill enable the student to access more places in the community and participate meaningfully?

8. Probability of Acquisition
   Is it likely that the student will acquire this skill in the school year?
FUNCTIONAL LIFE SKILLS
Example For school age students

GENERAL SCHOOL PARTICIPATION
1 Communication/Social Interaction:
   o Have a communication system
   o Ask for help/assistance when needed
   o Respond to verbal directions
   o Initiate greetings
   o Respond to social greetings and verbal initiations of others
   o Answer questions
2 Follow routines
3 Follow directions
4 Adapting to change in routines
5 Safety/fire drill procedures
6 Appropriate appearance
   o Wears clothing appropriate to the weather (consistent with peers)
   o Adjusts and fastens clothing to cover self appropriately (consistent with peers and school rules)
   o Maintains an appearance that is groomed (consistent with peers and unlikely to subject student to criticism)
7 Movement around the school
   o Travel and/or wait in line
   o Carry belongings
   o Know and travel to various locations (cafeteria, office, library, auditorium, etc.)

GYM / PHYSICAL EDUCATION
1 Change clothes
2 Use locker (manipulate lock, store and retrieve items)
3 Line-up and stay in line
4 Wait turn
5 Use math skills (counting, ordinal positions)
6 Use reading skills (sight words, directions, diagrams)
7 Stay in one place
8 Use eye-hand coordination
9 Know and follow safety rules
Media
1. Know and find books in A, B, C order
2. Put books and other library materials away
3. Access and use computer
4. Know and follow Numerical order
5. Categorize
6. Hold a book and turn pages
7. Follow, find, respond to sight words
8. Know identification number
9. Follow rules for whispering or being quiet
10. Research skills
11. Choose an interest and know how to locate information in interest area
12. Use AV equipment (operate projector, start/stop buttons, etc.)
13. Attend quietly to speaker
14. Extended listening
15. Visual tracking (video)

GENERAL CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION
1. Know and travel to classroom(s), assigned seat in room(s)
2. Follow/keep on schedule/times of day
3. Participate in opening procedures
4. Have and be able to locate needed supplies (organization)
5. Class behavioral expectations for participation
   - raising hand
   - waiting
   - appropriate voice volume
6. Use appropriate social skills for group interactions
7. Wait in line
8. Wait turn
9. Ask questions on topic of class activity
10. Speak/communicate to whole group
11. Use a computer (with adaptations as needed)
12. Complete tasks and know what to do when done
13. Reading, writing, math skills (for application in subject areas)
CAFETERIA
1  Use acceptable eating manners
2  Demonstrate personal hygiene (wipe hands, face)
3  Eating skills
4  Carry trays of food
5  Use acceptable social skills (greetings, departures, respect personal space)
6  Social communication skills (don’t interrupt, follow conversation topic, etc.)
7  Open/close containers
8  Use money skills (select amounts, make change)
9  Making food choices (balanced meal)
10  Read a menu
11  Clean up after eating
12  Time Management: eat within assigned time frame
13  Use vending machines (choice, insert money, manipulate selector, retrieve item)
14  Wait (in line, after eating)

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITY
1  Greet peers
2  Occupy self with age-appropriate leisure activity
3  Know personal information (phone numbers, address, parents’ name, etc.)
4  Cooperate with others in small group
5  Wait your turn
6  Follow directions
7  Use reading, writing, math skills related to activity
8  Follow schedule
9  Identify time for departure or change in routine
10  Social and hygiene skills related to eating
11  Complete play task/activity
12  Arrange transportation (to go home following after-school activity)
13  Follow rules for games
14  Locate appropriate areas for targeted activities
15  Follow safety procedures
HALLWAY – CHANGING CLASSES

1. Respect others’ interpersonal space
2. Greet others
3. Follow “unwritten” rules
4. Follow written directions
5. Following a schedule
6. Be on time to classes/activities
7. Know where to go to next location on schedule
8. Locate bathrooms
9. Use locker (recognize numbers, manipulate lock, store and retrieve items)
10. Use a map
11. Read and identify numbers (lockers/classrooms)
12. Read signs (office, restrooms, etc.)
13. Use appropriate language and voice level
14. Mobility
   - use stairs
   - deal with obstacles
   - deal with unpredictable situations
15. follow safety procedures during emergencies
16. Seek assistance if lost
17. Walk with someone (pacing)
## Criteria for Identifying “Functional” skills:

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