Stepwise Process Collaboration Guidance

The Stepwise process (Clayton, Burdge, Denham, Kleinert, & Kearns, 2006) is a collaborative process between general and special education staff. This collaboration is central to providing access to the general curriculum for students with significant disabilities.

The personal and professional interplay of ideas generated in regularly scheduled, collaborative planning times (Pugach & Johnson, 2002) is found to be the most effective.   However, some teachers have found that the process is new, especially addressing the general curriculum, and therefore uncertain of what to discuss. The following questions will help guide the teachers in the collaborative process of planning an instructional unit utilizing the four steps in the Stepwise Process.

Step 1: Identifying or linking to the standard

This step will be heavily led by the general education teacher who typically is more familiar with the grade level standards and the general curriculum. The intent of this step is to identify the standard(s) and grade level standard(s) that the unit of instruction will address. The collaboration will come into play when discussing what the standard means, discussing the Big Idea and Enduring Understanding (Wiggins and McTighe), and deconstructing the standard (Stiggins). Questions that may help guide this discussion:

Step 1: Identify or Link to the Standard	Notes
What standard(s) will be addressed in this unit?	
What grade level standard(s) will be addressed in this unit?	
What is the Big Idea or Enduring Understanding?	
How can we deconstruct it (e.g., nouns and verbs)?	
Is it still the grade level content standard if we do this (e.g. reduce the standard in breadth, depth, and complexity)?	

Step 2: Defining the Outcomes for Instruction

Information for the first part of this step must be developed solely for the general education student being careful not to reduce expectations for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Once the outcomes for all students has been determined then the discussion should shift to setting priorities for the student with disabilities. It may help to explain the requirements for the students (e.g., assessed on alternate achievement standards). Questions that may help guide this discussion:

Step 2: Define the Outcomes for Instruction	Notes
Questions regarding reduction of breadth of learning outcomes: – If this portion of the outcome were selected would it be sufficient? – Is it an essential part of the outcome? – Why is this important for students to learn?	
Questions regarding reduction of complexity of the learning outcomes: – If we move down to a lower level such as identify will it still lead the student to learning towards the outcome and grade level standard? – When you say that students will explain, describe, analyze, etc. how deeply do you expect them to do so?	
Question about reduction of the number of learning outcomes: – If only selecting one or two of the learning outcomes, which do you feel is most important?	
Misc. questions: – What does the student already know? – What supports are already in place for the student? – What will be most applicable? – What will most readily generalize to other areas? – What are IEP expectations? – What are assessment expectations?	

Step 3: Identifying Instructional Activities that Move Students Towards Achievement of the Standard

There are more aspects to discuss within this step than in steps 1 or 2. First activity in this step is to determine the instructional activities for all students that will be utilized during the unit to lead students towards the learning outcomes and grade level standards. The general education teacher will be the lead on this portion step 3, however, the special education teacher can play a crucial role of ensure Universal Design for Learning. Once the instructional activities have been determined then discussion

should be held to provide appropriate supports for the student with significant cognitive disabilities. Questions that provide guidance for providing appropriate supports:

Step 3: Identify Instructional Activities that Move Students Towards Achievement of the Standard	Notes
Questions that analyze the purpose of the instructional activities to deepen understanding of the activities: Access to Learning – What do you expect students to learn from this activity? – Follow up with clarifying questions (e.g., "so you mean...", "so if I have my student do this…") Interaction with materials/ participation – What materials will students be using? – What expectations will you have (e.g., are they suppose to use the computer to search information or must they use the computer to search information and to determine the reliability of the sources)? Engagement/motivation – What motivation are you using to get students involved in the activities? – Is the motivation you are using critical to the expected learning (e.g., getting to conduct an experiment)? – Will you allow _____ in your classroom (e.g., music with headphones, rocking chair, snack, extra computer use, etc.)?	

Before moving to the next part of step 3, providing appropriate supports, take time as a team to reflect on the individual students.   Describe the student's strengths, needs, and weaknesses.

Step 3	Notes
Student Description: Strengths (e.g., identifies picture symbols) Needs (e.g., needs large materials to manipulate due to limited fine motor skills) Weaknesses (e.g., limited vision, short attention span)	

Consider the information on the student to then decide what barriers may prevent the student to participate and learn in the instructional activities. Keep in mind that missing an opportunity such as using the student's high motivation of working with peers results in a barrier (www.cast.org)

Step 3	

Access to learning
– What barriers keep the student from learning in each activity? Examples:
    · Material too difficult for the student
    · Too much material at one time
    · Used unfamiliar vocabulary
 	
Interaction with materials allowing participation
– What barriers are keeping the student from interacting with the materials? Examples:
    · Unable to read text
    · Physically unable to manipulate the materials
    · Nonverbal and unable to participate in class discussion
Engagement/motivation?
– What barriers are keeping the student from engaging or being motivated to participate and learn? Examples:
    · No auditory feedback
    · Not provided needed stimulation	

Once barriers are identified it is time to discuss possible modifications and supports to assist the students overcome the identified barriers. It is important during this discussion to take care to stick to the same activities as designed for all students.

Step 3	Notes
<u>Access to learning</u> – <u>Interaction with materials allowing participation</u> – <u>Engagement/motivation</u> –	

Step 4: Targeting Specific Objectives from IEP

During this step the discussions will look at IEP objectives and each of the planned activities.

Step 4	Notes

Questions regarding academic IEP objectives.
  – When could we embed objectives that are academic but are at a lower grade level (e.g., letter or number recognition)?
  – What opportunities do we have to practice academic IEP objectives from another content area (e.g., reading in science class)?
Questions regarding communication and other IEP objectives.
  – What words do we need to	

provide communication symbols for? – When can we embed social communication into the instruction? – What opportunities might exist to work on fine or gross motor skills? – What opportunities might exist to work on behavior issues (e.g., listening, hands to self, on task, task completion, etc.)?	

While scheduled time to collaborate is important, it is not the only way and not always feasible. Karin Hess (2007) developed a process for collaboration which can routinely involve several collaborative "events" such as:

- Exchanging written lesson plans – back and forth
- The "one-legged" interview – only takes as long as you can stand on one leg
- A short sit and talk session

During these short sit and talk sessions or the "one-legged" interviews Kathy Gee (2001) proposes a conversational approach to a unit planning process in which 6 basic questions spur the discussion:

1. What are the primary goals/outcomes for the students during this unit? What's the range of skills we'll be working with? What are the social expectations?
2. What are the main teaching activities and routines that will be used to engage the students in the learning process?
3. How does each of the activities look? Tell me more!
4. Now let's talk a bit about the particular students who have disabilities/extra challenges. Let's brainstorm:
   a. Expectations for the focus students: are modifications necessary? Any alternative outcomes?
   b. Any adaptations/accommodations which need to be made in the way in which we provide information to the students?
   c. Any changes in the ways in which this student will provide information to us? How will the student e a contributing member of the class?
   d. Are there any other things we can do to support the student's social and educational integration in the class? During which activities will the student need adult support?
5. What is the best way for me to summarize this information for you?
6. How should we plan to spend some time together with the student?

Clayton, J., Burdge, M., Denham, A., Kleinert, H., & Kearns, J. (2006). A four-step process for accessing the general curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38(5). 20-27

Gee, K (2001). Looking closely at instructional approaches: Honoring and challenging all children and youth in inclusive schools. In W. Sailor (ED.). *Inclusive Education and School/Communitiy Partnerships* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press).

Hess, K. (2007). It takes a learning community. *Working draft.* (Center for Assessment, Dover, NH).

Pugach, M.C. & Johnson, L.J. (2002). *Collaborative practitioners, collaborative schools* (2nd edition) (Denver, EO: Love).