Preface

Inclusion is not just putting students together of differing abilities and hoping that everyone learns. We have learned that students with disabilities, especially those with more severe disabilities, will require specific instruction to acquire the skills that they need to learn. Close physical placement with peers who are not disabled will not lead to social interactions and the development of social skills unless they are specifically taught (Carter & Hughes, 2005; C. Hughes, Carter, Hughes, Bradford, & Copeland, 2002). Likewise, these students are not likely to pick up all the possible academic skills in general education classrooms unless the material has been adapted *and* the skills taught to them.

We know that students with the most severe types of disabilities can learn a number of skills when systematically instructed in a manner that is appropriate for the task and accounts for individual learning needs. This information will be presented in Chapter 2 and so not repeated here. This acquired knowledge over many years of teaching and research should not be discarded because the placement of the students may have changed from special education environments to inclusive ones. Applying what we know about how students learn to inclusive environments makes sense, given the necessary adjustments.

This text will present evidence-based practice in the field of severe disabilities with suggestions based on personal experience of how to effectively incorporate them into general education classes. Chapter 1 provides the foundation for the text with descriptions of recommended practices that are to be assumed throughout the entire text. Such factors as family involvement, inclusion, and positive behavior support are integral to any high-quality educational program. The information hopefully will assist teachers as they include their students in general education lessons that address the core curriculum. Chapter 2 covers researched and evidence-based strategies that address the "how to" of instruction. Such strategies can be effective when students are in general education classes, although adjustments will need to be made, especially during lessons involving large group instruction. Chapter 3 targets assessment issues, both of the student and the learning environment. Identifying learning opportunities during typical classroom activities must be part of any assessment when the goal is to enhance the student's access to the core curriculum. Chapter 4 describes numerous and very specific examples of different students, ages five to twenty-one, who have severe disabilities and are learning a variety of subject matter (e.g., science, social studies, reading, Spanish). The focus is on techniques to shape desired behavior using adapted material while still keeping the student as an integral member of the overall class activity. Of course, the ideas suggested in this text will have to be adjusted to meet the individual needs of specific students.

One premise of this text is that students will have multiple teachers across any one school day who must work collaboratively to provide the most meaningful education. Chapter 5 highlights the many different potential teachers any one student may have and the need for the student to learn to work with many different individuals. Chapter 6, cowritten with Dr. Kathy Peckham-Hardin, stresses the importance of collecting data on meaningful skills to show accountability. Students cannot just be exposed to core curriculum; they must also be expected to learn and acquire new skills. Finally, the issue of next steps to take is addressed in Chapter 7. A person-centered approach is recommended, keeping the student's needs and interests in the forefront of any future steps taken to support the individual.

Too often, students with severe disabilities are denied access to general education classrooms because educational teams cannot see how they could benefit from this placement. They may not know how to adapt the core curriculum to make it meaningful for students of such different abilities. They may not know of positive behavioral support strategies to assist students with severe behavior challenges to control their unwanted and problematic behaviors. They may not know how to employ direct and systematic instruction to teach meaningful skills during typical classroom activities. While these issues are real and do pose a hindrance to inclusive learning opportunities, they should not bar the students with moderate or severe disabilities from the general education classroom. Students with disabilities have the right to obtain an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Those providing educational support for these students must acquire the skills needed to ensure such placement occurs. One major purpose of this text is to offer some information pertaining to this goal. My hope is that those on the educational team, both professional and family, will find the information and examples provided in this text helpful toward creating inclusive opportunities that are beneficial to all students.

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Teaching Students With Moderate to Severe Intellectual Disabilities in General Education Classrooms

Foundational Beliefs

KEY CONCEPTS

- Students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities can learn and acquire many skills.
- Progress has been made toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in general education, but considerable work remains.
- Inclusive education ensures access to the core curriculum and active participation in the general education lesson with the necessary supports and services.
- Skilled teachers with high expectations are needed to help maximize learning potential.
- Recommended educational practices include the presumption of competence, inclusive education, strong family involvement, positive behavior support, and self-determination training.

Education should support students' learning and ability to learn. For students with severe disabilities, this learning can occur in either special education rooms or general education rooms with peers without disabilities. While inclusive education for students with severe disabilities is strongly supported by the research (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Dore, Dion, Wagner, & Brunet, 2002; Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Idol, 2006), in actual practice, considerable inexperience and lack of knowledge hinder its effectiveness for students. Many educators in special

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as social skills, vocational tasks, and cause-effect learning. Several comparative studies have been done to determine the most efficient means of teaching students with moderate to severe disabilities (Colozzi, Ward, & Crotty, 2008; Gast, Ault, Wolery, Doyle, & Belanger, 1988; Schuster, Griffen, & Wolery, 1992). More recently, researchers have been examining teaching strategies that occur in inclusive general education classrooms. Such investigations are necessary if we are to transfer what we have learned as a field in specialized settings to typical educational environments. Furthermore, the field needs to target academic skills and the most effective way of teaching these skills to a wide range of students having intellectual disabilities.

Teaching involves helping others acquire skills that are new or have not been thoroughly mastered. Some students learn very quickly, only needing to hear the information one time before they are able to apply it effectively. Other students require much more time and instruction in order to understand expectations of the task and how to apply new information to various situations. When students have moderate to severe intellectual disabilities, the ability to quickly ascertain associations between concepts, recognize expectations, and then apply them can be compromised. They tend to need a fair amount of repetition to learn skills with multiple opportunities to practice on a regular basis (Westling & Fox, 2009). These students typically need a systematic and structured approach to acquire new skills, to gain some fluency with these skills, maintain them, and finally, generalize them to similar but novel situations (Browder, Spooner, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Harris, & Wakeman, 2008). Teachers need to provide information and support in such a way that it makes sense to the individual learner so that knowledge and skills can be acquired.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDENT INTERESTS ■

Students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities may perform longer and with greater attention to the task if their interests are embedded into activities. Edeh (2006) investigated the impact of interest-based learning and found that the students with mental retardation in the interest-based method maintained independent problem solving skills more than the control students or those in the traditional approach. Making use of student interests could mean using what they like to solve math problems, weaving these interests into stories being read, or adding interests to social studies units being studied. Light and McNaughton (2009) suggest the use of student interests when learning literacy skills. While they recommend a sequence of literacy skills to be learned, they also advise that if a student knows certain words as a result of a strong interest, then using those words as a starting point for greater literacy learning should be respected. For example, if a student really likes vacuum cleaners, then teaching the recognition of the letter *V* and the sound it makes in the word *vacuum* might be a good starting place for the student. Interests don't replace the core curriculum but are added to what is being learned to make it more relevant for the student (e.g., We have vacuum cleaners now, but they didn't have them during the Civil War).

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Table 2.4 Examples of Questions Used by a Teacher During Large Group Discussions to Include a Student With Moderate to Severe Intellectual Disabilities

Potential Questions to Ask a Student With Moderate or Severe Disabilities	Follow-Up Questions With Rest of Class
Topic: The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (Twelfth-Grade English Lit.)	
1. "What was scaring all the people in the town?"	1. "Right. The Headless Horseman. So what hypothetical events led to the creation of the Headless Horseman?"
2. "Did Ichabod Crane have a love interest or girlfriend?"	2. "Yes, he did. Was this a typical boy-meets-girl romance or were there different elements to it?"
Topic: Factoring (Sixth-Grade math)	
1. "Can you find the number *2*?"	1. "That's correct. It's a *2*. So, if this number 2 is written in upperscript next to a number, what does it tell us about that number?"
2. "Can you find the *X*?"	2. "Why not write the number as *5 X 5* and not 5^2?"
Topic: Hamlet (Eleventh-Grade English Lit.)	
1. "Was Hamlet happy about his mother marrying his uncle?"	1. "That's right. He wasn't happy. In what act and scene of the play are you first made aware of Hamlet's anger? What does he think of his mother at this point and why?"
2. "What happened to Hamlet's mother at the end?"	2. "Yes, she died. Was this intentional? Explain the tragedy of Hamlet."
Topic: Phonic Skills (1st Grade)	
1. "Can you find a word that starts with 'mmmmmm'?"	1. "What letter does the word *moon* end in? Can you think of other words that rhyme with *moon*?"
2. "Whose name starts with *J*?"	2. "That's right Jeremy! Your name starts with a *J*. Does anyone's name end in *J*? Have a *J* in it?"
Topic: Writing (Fifth-Grade Language Arts)	
1. "Whom will you write your interest letter to?"	1. "A fireman. OK. Good. What type of requests might you ask of a fireman? What is the best way to state your request so you get a positive response?"
2. "What will you ask the firefighter in your letter?"	2. "To go for a ride? Good! How many of you think T____ will get his request met? Why or why not? Will how he write his letter have an impact?"

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