ADAPTING CURRICULUM IN GENERAL EDUCATION SETTINGS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH COMPLEX COMMUNICATION NEEDS: WHAT’S GOING WELL AND WHERE CAN WE IMPROVE?

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Agenda

■ My research interests
■ Define and analyze a problem
■ Brainstorm: how do we solve this problem?
■ Discussion

About me

■ Special Educator
■ Doctoral Candidate at Penn State
  – Special Education
■ Future: Establish a line of research
  – Become an “expert” problem solver (Glaser & Chi, 1988)
  ■ Develop literacy interventions
    – Population: Individuals with complex communication needs
    – Location: Inclusive/general education classrooms

Intervention Ideas

■ Literacy interventions
  – More difficult to teach than science
    ■ (General educators perspective; Kent-Walsh & Light, 2003)
■ Adapting text for individuals with complex communication needs
  – Intervention agents: typical peers
    ■ (Carter, Sisco, Melekoglu, & Kurkowski, 2007; Ruppar, Dymond, & Gaffney, 2011)
Why not start now?

- Great idea!
- Complex issue
  - Many moving parts

Defining and Analyzing a Problem

1. What is the problem?
2. Why is it important?
3. What is the essence or heart of the problem?
4. Why hasn’t this problem been solved already?

Glaser & Chi (1988)

Berliner & Scardamalia (2016)
“What is the problem?”

- Inclusion requires curriculum adaptation
  - Time
    - (Finke, McNaughton, & Drager, 2009; Ruppar, Dymond, & Gaffney, 2011)
  - Collaborative teaming/training
    - (Kent-Walsh & Light, 2003; Ruppar et al., 2011)

“Why is this important?”

THE PROBLEM:

General educators, special educators, and SLPs struggle to understand:
(a) how to adapt all curriculum (e.g., literacy) in a timely manner and
(b) who should be adapting the curriculum
“Why is this important?”

- Required by law (IDEA, 2004)
- Individuals would have greater access to rigor, relevance, and relationships (Carter & Draper, 2010)

**IMPORTANCE:**

Schools and professionals are encouraged to include individuals with more severe disabilities within the general education classroom, but there seems to be difficulty in making that happen.

“What is the heart of the problem?”
“What is the heart of the problem?"
- Collaborative teaming

Who is involved in collaborative teaming?
- Parents
- SLP
- Special Ed.
- General Ed.

Perspectives from current research

General educators:
- Not always involved (Kent-Walsh & Light, 2003)

Special educators:
- Confident with collaborative teaming and curriculum adaptation strategies (Soto, Muller, Hunt, & Goetz, 2001).

SLPs:
- Belief that integration is critical for individuals who require AAC, yet they are encourage to have traditional pullout services (Soto et al., 2001).
HEART OF THE PROBLEM:
Collaborative teaming, expertise, & time -
What are the roles of the various team members, and how can each members' specialty area contribute to curriculum adaptation in a timely manner?

“Why hasn’t this problem been solved already?”

Growing body of research
Moving parts
Many barriers

Barriers to literacy instruction in general education settings:

- Ruppar, Dymond, & Gaffney (2011): Survey of 69 special educators in Illinois who taught individuals who participated in alternate assessments and required AAC.
- A few of the 17 barriers, according to special educators:
  - Level of content taught in general education settings is not appropriate
  - Type of content taught in general education settings is not appropriate
  - Lack of expertise of other professionals (therapists, general education teachers)
  - Time needed to adapt general education materials to student needs
  - Insufficient opportunities to address goals in general education settings
Some suggestions

- Shared goals?
  - Disagreement about importance of general education content
    (Kent Walsh & Light, 2003; Ruppar et al., 2011)
- Clear roles
  - General educators lack expertise in adapting curriculum
    (Ruppar et al., 2011)
  - SPED teachers may lack expertise in general education curriculum
- Communication
  - Limited opportunities to build consensus
- Time
  - Limited time to adapt curriculum (Ruppar et al., 2011)

WHY IS THIS UNSOLVED?

There are many barriers and moving pieces to successful inclusion. Specifically, there is a need for shared goals, defined roles, effective and frequent communication, and more time.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

Analyze the problem!

- How are general educators, special educators, and SLPs:
  - (a) adapting all curriculum (e.g., literacy) in a timely manner and
  - (b) who is responsible for adapting what pieces of the curriculum?

Analysis of success

- There are successful readers who use AAC
  - But what does that look like for these individuals in general education settings?
How do we get there?

- **Qualitative study**
  - Interviews or observations
  - Focus: adapting curriculum

- **Intervention**
  - Agent: researcher

- **Intervention**
  - Agent: teacher

- **Intervention**
  - Agent: peer

Qualitative study

- Interviews
- Observations

Research methodology

- **Semi-structured interviews**
  - Interviewing teams or units:
    - SLP
    - SPLED Teacher
    - General Ed. Teacher
  - Finding themes within units and between professionals

- **Observational**
  - In person OR recorded lesson to observe adapted curriculum
    - How long is the student engaged?
    - Does the task align with the goal of the lesson?

or... a combination of both?

DISCUSSION

The logistics of the project
Recruitment?

■ Semi-structured interviews:
  - Possibly through ASHA to recruit SLP’s
  ■ Snowball recruitment for general and special educators
■ Observational:
  - via social media/support groups
  ■ Begin with an interview → then request observational opportunity

Interesting topics to target

■ What possible questions should be asked?
  - Describe what is going well with adapting general education curriculum for the student you work with?
  - Describe a few challenges or barriers you encounter when adapting general education curriculum for the student you work with?
  - Have you noticed adapted general education curriculum benefiting the student you work with? How so?
References


