Reflections and Recommendations

Importance of College and Career Readiness for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

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Importance of College and Career Readiness (CCR)
Before asking why anything, including CCR, is important for students with significant cognitive disabilities (SCD), ask why it is important for ANY student.

THE ANSWER IS THE SAME.

Parents want all their children to have an education that leads to self-determination and a career for financial independence and fulfillment.
www.thinkcollege.net lists 206 programs, but as many as 450 programs nationally— and growing (Hart & Grigal, 2010)

Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 addresses some of these programs, providing for technical assistance and federal financial aid
College and CAREER Readiness

- Ultimate goals for all students (after college or directly from HS) are self determination and career readiness.

- Students with SCD are leaving school without the skills they need

- This presentation focuses on self-determination and career skills that can be learned through academics
College and CAREER Readiness

- Academic achievement must not be sacrificed to provide career skills—they are entwined.

- The key is prioritized academic content using appropriate supports and services.

- Functional skills can be learned through general education curriculum e.g. chemistry/cooking.
What FUNCTIONAL skills did you learn?

- Communication competence
- Social skills to work well in small groups
- Independent work behaviors
- Problem Solving
- Reading/writing/math for information
- Assistance seeking behaviors

All needed for self-determination and career readiness
Questions for prioritizing skills and content

- Do students of the same age do this?
- Is this skill REALLY necessary for independent life? Is there a workaround?
- Is there a point in teaching students with SCD academic content they may never use?
- What content is needed to build on for later grades
Other students don’t directly use all the academics nor do they learn every functional skill they need.

The learning process itself results in benefits, most notably critical thinking and problem solving.

The least dangerous assumption is founded on the idea that exposing students to learning is not harmful; however, keeping them from it is
Encourage your state to use rigorous assessments strongly aligned to college and career ready content standards

NCSC and DLM are developing these types of assessments and working on the issue of prioritizing skills and content
Systems Change to Support College and Career Readiness
Define College and Career Readiness for ALL

- Consider how the measures and broad strategies relate to ALL students.

- For example, some states define college readiness as —a level of preparation a first-time student needs in order to succeed in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution.”
Inclusion for Improved Outcomes

- Look at LRE by disability category, LRE applies to job training as well as classroom activities

- Encourage teacher preparation programs where general and special education overlap

- Include inclusion skills in credentials
Access to General Education Curriculum

- Implement UDL for curriculum, materials, professional development, technology and assessments
  www.udlcenter.org

- Allow students taking an alternate assessment the opportunity to earn a regular diploma
Transition

- Start transition planning at age 14
- Require adult service agency to attend IEP meetings
- Transition specialists need: credentials; knowledge re students with SCD, customized employment and job development; a focus on skills, interests and dignity of students
- Encourage paid employment before leaving HS (including summer employment)
Acknowledgements

- Information in slides 5–9, 12 came from the NAAC publication “What Does ‘College and Career Ready’ mean for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities?”

- The systems change recommendations in slides 13–15 came from the Collaboration to Promote Self Determinations paper “All Kids Count”