

## Functional Communication

One of the most important transition skills for students with disabilities is functional communication. "Functional communication" is simply the ability to communicate wants, needs, and desires effectively to others, either verbally (written or spoken), gesturally, or by other means (such as sign language or augmentative or alternative communication). This skill is needed for students to have successful employment, education, relationships, and healthy lifestyles (including mental health).

All jobs and employment training will require an individual to communicate. We have to communicate whether or not we understand how to perform a task or need more instruction. We have to tell those we work with when we are taking a break, what task we are working on, or ask for help. In some cases, we may



## This Issue

Assessments **P.1**

Bibliotherapy **P.2**

Life Skills **P.3**

## Assessments: An Easy Way (pt.1)

Transition assessment can feel confusing at times. What counts as a "good" assessment? How many assessments do I need to give? How frequently? Past editions of the newsletter have given you some examples of specific assessments. Here, we will talk about how to make the process easier in identifying assessments and using them in the classroom.

You may remember a form that was sent out at the end of last year titled PCSD Assessment Planning Form. This document will help you gather all the information we need for a student. The list is long and can seem intimidating. However, not every area needs a formal assessment. For example, you may have student with a M/M disability served with only math services and no medical concerns listed. An email to teachers and parents can give you all the information you need on manual dexterity, personality, home living, and money management. This information can be listed as "informal teacher/parent interview" on

the transition plan. A student interview can also be used for personality, home living, and recreation and leisure interests.

Structured interviews can also gather a lot of information at once. Parent versions can be sent home or emailed. Student versions can be administered to an entire resource class as part of a bell ringer(s). There is a temptation to create our own interviews and label them as "structured." We encourage you to find (or ask us for support) structured interviews that already exist rather than try to create your own.

Review of records is another easy way to gather data. What data do we have from past evaluations and what does it mean? What do past IEPs tell us about persistence, goal setting, and/or goal attainment? (This is where our elementary teachers can really help us)

We have many other assessments that can use. There are assessments out there for self-determination. There are ones for personal preference and job readiness. Our school counselors can help us with college and career readiness and planning. Stay tuned to the newsletter for more on this topic.

## Functional Communication

be required to interact with customers, either in answering questions or giving a friendly greeting. We also use functional communication to order food, socialize with friends, and communicate our health needs to doctors or other professionals.

Common misconceptions for students with high support needs are that they don't want to socialize with peers and they don't have mental health issues. The reality is that many do want to socialize and do have mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression. Their inability to functionally communicate limits how we are able to assist them. One of the best treatments for loneliness, depression, and anxiety is having those around you able to listen to you and connect with you.

When developing a transition plan, consider functional communication needs and include your SLP if needed. Even our students with more minimal support needs could benefit. Do those students know how communicate wants, needs, and feelings in healthy, productive ways? This can be an area that all teachers can work on supporting for transition, even in elementary school.



## Bibliotherapy: Teaching SEL at Every Grade Level

Social-Emotional Learning is becoming a key part of transition instruction. How can books help?

Social-Emotional Learning has gained popularity in recent years. Many of our students need help learning how to manage a wide range of emotions in order to meet their long-term goals. In this issue, we will talk about one strategy that can be really helpful with students in elementary school or with severe/profound disabilities.

Bibliotherapy is the practice of using books in a therapeutic way to gain insight on how to manage a wide range of feelings and difficult circumstances. Bibliotherapy can be used to teach social skills and emotional coping by showing the reader how characters handled a situation or conflict. Bibliotherapy can also normalize feelings for a student who may feel they are the only one to experience an event or emotion.

Bibliotherapy starts with the selection of a book that covers the topic or skill that needs to be taught. The book needs to be age appropriate but also not too far outside the student's reading level (think Zone of Proximal Development as it pretains to reading instruction). The book should also be culturally appropriate. For example, if you want to use bibliotherapy with a Latinx student, then find a book that uses characters of that background, especially the main character. Length of book is important to consider. Older students who have higher executive functioning skills may respond well to chapter books, such as Harry Potter. Younger students or those with lower executive/cognitive functioning may do better with books that can be finished in one setting and re-read multiple times.

Begin with introducing the book; its topic and characters. Ask the student questions about their knowledge on the topic, what they think will happen in the story, or what they hope to learn (DOK questions are great to incorporate throughout). Use strategic pauses to check for understanding and ask the student how they can relate to the stituation or apply the same (or similar) response. You may even want to add activities to the beginning, middle, or end of the bibliotherapy lesson. (There is a great resource page through BYU with lesson plans by Dr. Melissa Heath. Reach out if you would like the link)

Bibliotherapy can be a great tool for making emotional learning more concrete and less abstract. It is also an evidence-based practice for increasing social skills and emotional resiliency. Please reach out if you have questions.



# Life Skills: What Do We Mean?

Life skills may mean different things to different people. Here, we want to clarify what we mean by life skills and give you examples of skills we can teach in schools.

Life skills broadly means any skills an individual needs in order to be an independent, responsible, and contributing member of their society. Life skills have changed over the years. At one point, knowing how to work on your own car was considered a needed life skill. Now, with cars being much more complicated, it has become less of a priority for some societies.

The selection of what life skills may vary by grade or age. Our elementary school students will usually focus on more foundational life skills than our high school students. Let's take a brief look at some examples from elementary, middle, and high schools.

In elementary, we may focus more on foundational skills, meaning skills that generalize to many areas and are needed for more situation specific skills. Learning how to make wise decisions with time social behavior is one example. Another is learning how to appropriately ask for help and state why. Persisting through difficult or un-

wanted tasks could be another.

Middle schools can build on these skills by making them more situation specific. Learning how to take on more responsibility is also good. We can teach students money management, basic cooking, and laundry skills.

High school continues to strengthen all these skills. We add in authentic learning experiences in the home and community. We emphasize independence. Learning bus schedules, how to drive, or Americans with Disabilities Act are appropriate.

## Research Spotlight

### Latinx Families & Transition Planning

This article comes from Aleman-Tovar and colleagues in April of 2022 (if interested in the full article, email Alex). The researchers sought the level of knowledge parents had, what type of knowledge they want, and how they would like to receive training. The need for this research is due to a systemic barriers that exist for Latinx families. The researchers found that families are less interested in natural supports at home, most likely because they have already been doing that for years. They are more interested in learning about school-based planning and services and adult services (what they lacked before and after training). They also indicated that online training was preferred for learning and that parent advocacy skills should be included.

## Mindset Minute

"Transition is not just a program or a project or a set of activities that has a bigging and end. It is a vision and goal for unfolding the fullest possible potential for an individual and a systematic framework for planning to fulfill that potential." (Kochhar-Bryant & Bassett, 2002, p. 19)

## This Month's Classroom Tip

### Q: How Do I Embed Skills in Instruction

A: First, think about skills you may be teaching in your lessons that are not the learning target (we call this covert or passive learning). You may already be teaching behavior or social skills by how you conduct your lessons and whole-class behavior management. Second, as you consider the passive learning happening in your class, think about how you can make this more intentional. Can you insert a few comments or slides that highlight the additional skills being taught in the lesson and why they are important?

Third, think about what academic skills can be taught as you focus on life skills. For example, you can do an activity of using grocery store adds to practice shopping with a budget (thanks to Donna Chantry for this lesson idea). Students need to be able to add, and possibly subtract or multiply, as they pick the needed grocery items. So not only are students learning how to shop and budget, but they are practicing math skills. The same can be done in learning how to cook (fractions, reading comprehension), sew (geometry), or fold laundry (following directions, reading, attention).



## Professional Development

Suscipit, vicis praesent erat feugait epulae, validus indole dui enim vala consequat genitus at. Sed, plago conventio, aliquip ulum accumsan adipiscing augue blandit minim abbas oppeto commoveo vereor.

## Upcoming Events

- **Volutpat mos at neque nulla lobortis dig nissim convention.**

Enim neo velit adsum odio, multo, in commoveo quibus premo tamen erat huic. Occuro luxor dolore, ut at praemitto opto si sudo, opes feugiat iriure validu.

- **Feugait in obruo quae ingenium tristisque elit vel natu meus.**

Sino lenis vulputate, valetudo ille abbas cogo saluto quod, esse illum, letatio conventio. Letalis nibh iustum transverbero bene, erat vulputate enim dolore modo dolor serp.

- **Molior torqueo capio velit loquor aptent ut feugiat pneum.**

Delenit abdo esse quia, te huic. Ratis neque ymo, venio illum pala damnum pneum. Aptent nulla aliquip camur ut consequat aptent nisl in voco olior torqueo capio.

- **Lorem, vicis praesent erat feugait dolor.**

Adipiscing magna jumentum velit iriure volutpat mos at neque nulla lobortis digniss conventio, torqueo, acsi roto modol etalis nibh iustum transverbero bene, erat.

Tech Times Issue 00 Month Year



5432 Any Street West  
Townsville, State 54321  
555.543.5432 ph  
555.543.5433 fax  
[www.yourwebsitehere.com](http://www.yourwebsitehere.com)



This template is provided free by LayoutReady, a StockLayouts company.  
Find more design templates like this at [LayoutReady.com](http://LayoutReady.com) >