

Providing Access to the General Education Curriculum to Students with Mental Retardation

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Project Abstract

This study focuses on the need for making adaptations to instruction and materials for students with mental retardation. More and more, students with mental retardation are being placed in general education settings for instruction. Students with disabilities are also required to participate in standards based, state and district wide testing. Therefore, it is essential that these students have access to the general education curriculum while obtaining the functional goals in their IEP. The purpose of this study is to explore the learning characteristics of students with mental retardation in order to design meaningful and appropriate instruction in the general education curriculum.

Physical placement of students with mental retardation in the general education setting does not constitute inclusion. Students with disabilities need to be included in all aspects of the classroom community including class routines, instruction, and activities. Successful inclusion depends on the commitment of special and general education teachers who collaboratively identify unique student support needs, strengths, and weaknesses while planning lessons and activities that allow participation of students with mental retardation. This philosophy focuses on how to teach the curriculum to all students as opposed to deciding what to teach or whether it is necessary to provide instruction to a specific population of students.

All students benefit from universally designed instruction that addresses the needs of the entire classroom, instead of just one segment of the population. The integration of functional skills into the general education curriculum will help students with mental retardation to achieve their IEP goals as well as assist them with the transfer of those learned skills across multiple environments.

