

# **Practical Application and Functionality of Standards-Based Curriculum in YOUR Classroom**

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## A word about differential instruction...

- Obviously there is a huge variety of students represented by the teachers in the room.
- The question that remains is how can you apply the concepts you have learned today and the Houghton-Mifflin curriculum to benefit students of varied abilities in your class?

## Regarding the “lower” end of the autism spectrum...

- These students may not use spoken words to communicate. How can you know they are “learning” phonics?
- Even more importantly, is it **FUNCTIONAL** for these students to be learning phonics and reading?
- Do we have any say in the standardized curriculum we use to teach our students language arts?

**Unfortunately, it is not always up to us  
*what we use to teach skills.***

However, it is ALWAYS up to us to determine *how* to use what we have. That is the job of the teacher.

# Some answers

- For students who do not respond with vocal language, you will need to use their primary mode(s) of communication to check for understanding of concepts. This may include receptive and expressive identification of images, letters, or sounds spoken by someone else.
- The responses you elicit from these students should align with the responses in which they engage on a regular basis.
  - For example, you wouldn't expect a student who has not learned to "Touch \_\_\_\_\_" to identify the picture on the page whose name starts with "d" by touching it.
  - Teach prerequisite skills FIRST so these students have a fair chance to obtain the information you are ultimately trying to teach.

## Some more answers

- Concepts like stimulus control are particularly important when utilizing standardized curriculum to teach skills to this population.
- Just because the curriculum gives you the strategies to use doesn't mean that is the best way to use it for your students.
- The most important thing is that your students are learning skills they can use to lead independent and meaningful lives.

# Examples of prerequisite skills to access standardized curriculum

- Following directions
  - “Look at the\_\_\_\_\_”
  - “Touch the\_\_\_\_\_”
- Answering questions
- Attention to a person or task
- Sitting in a chair
- Book readiness skills

# You are wondering...



But can't I use the standardized curriculum to teach these prerequisite skills with my "lower functioning" students?

**YES!!!!!!**

That could be making  
the curriculum more  
functional for the  
student.

# A little more about differential instruction...

- What about the students within my classroom who function at different levels? How can I possibly make this work for every single one of them?
- How can I ensure that some students don't get bored and others don't get left in the dust?

# I say once again...

That is the  
important and  
difficult job of the  
teacher.



# Look! Even more answers...

- Practical ways to implement differential instruction:
  - Conduct all lessons in small, skill-level based groups
  - Utilize materials, language, and instructional style already familiar to the students
  - Frequent formative assessments to determine whether progress is being made towards goals.
  - Repeating lessons multiple times for some students to build fluency

# Making it Work



So how do I make this work when there is only me and one other staff member in my classroom?

# Scheduling and organization ideas

- Group students by skill level and assign staff to lead one of the groups while you instruct the other. Rotate groups so all students have the opportunity to complete both lessons/tasks.
- Possibly have a third group who will engage in independent/leisure tasks and rotate the three groups.
- Assign staff to do similar-type lessons every time so they become more familiar with them (to save on prep and learning time). Staff need fluency-building too!

# Scheduling and organization ideas (cont'd)

- Have designated areas of the classroom specific to the type of lesson that will be conducted there so students learn what the expectations are even before the tasks are presented.
  - Worksheet area
  - Reading books area
  - Whole group instruction area
- Use additional staff members to prompt student responding within the small groups.
- Use peers to lead groups/run fluency sessions
  - Peers in the class
  - Peers from other classes