

# PREFACE

**A** *Functional Assessment and Curriculum for Teaching Students with Disabilities*, the fourth edition of *Teaching the Moderately and Severely Handicapped*, is a major revision of the first, second, and third editions. The substantial alterations made in the present edition have been compelled by several intersecting phenomena: (a) the changing perceptions of the nature of special education (e.g., inclusion, especially of students with severe disabilities and the impact of inclusion on the need to modify the scope and nature of the traditional curriculum; the essential role of transitioning; the emphasis on a holistic approach, and the movement toward the development of independent living skills); (b) the identification of new and underserved populations (e.g., infants and toddlers, youth with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, gifted and talented students with disabilities, students with emotional disorders, and students with autistic spectrum disorders); (c) modifications in service delivery (e.g., interagency cooperation and increased parental and family involvement); (d) federal reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the civil and legal rights of persons with disabilities (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act); (e) reductions in targeted federal dollars; (f) rapidly expanding technological advances, including the role of information, communicative, and other assistive technologies; (g) the impact of high stakes testing of students with disabilities on curriculum and curricular priorities; (h) the need to access essential community resources for implementing a life-centered education; (i) the expanding role of paraprofessional personnel; and (j) the creation and improvement of positive family/school partnerships.

The central problem, however, continues to be the nonproductive and, at times, destructive magical thinking engaged in by educators who believe that structural changes alone will automatically result in student achievement and improvements in education. Unfortunately, many special students continue to receive an education that is not “special” whether they are placed in segregated or inclusive settings. Structural change that does not address the individual and special needs of students with disabilities or attend to the quality of instruction is merely cosmetic, not substantive. We consider this functionally oriented curriculum—if it is implemented by general and special education teachers, parents, and other trained personnel—to be a critical way of making the education of students with special needs an education that is truly special, regardless of the setting.

The first edition of this text, introduced in the 1970s, coincided with the movement for the educational rights of individuals with disabilities, as mandated by the landmark federal legislation P. L. 94-142. This was also the time when parent and advocacy groups, along with many other professionals, consolidated their efforts based on a collective mission not only to provide special education and related services to all children and youth with “handicapping conditions” but also to integrate them, whenever appropriate and feasible, in the public schools and the mainstream of society.

Instructional areas and emphases addressed by the first three editions, such as functional academics, interpersonal and social skills, and leisure education, represented

a significant departure from the curriculum traditionally being taught in many special education programs. Of equal importance was the attempt to comprehensively and clearly identify appropriate instructional objectives, strategies, and resources that would promote independence, be age appropriate, be suitable for teaching in a natural environment, and be of lifelong functional value.

Much change has occurred in recent years. Evolving ideological currents have had a significant impact on guiding and determining the content of this new fourth edition of the curriculum series. Several recent developments—the shift to student achievement, the need for interagency cooperation in service delivery, reduction in available federal dollars, emphasis on a holistic approach to educating all students, the need for highly qualified professionals, and the movement toward independent living—have resulted in major changes in our profession. For example, special education terminology has been modified. The word *handicapped* is no longer used to describe a person who is challenged by a disability. The rejection of the word *handicapped* has come about because the problems experienced by persons with disabilities are viewed as not being within the person, but rather as arising from social attitudes and perceptions and by society's failure to provide needed programs, services, and resources that will compensate for or minimize the effects of the individual's disability.

This change in terminology has been incorporated in the several amendments to the original Education for All Handicapped Children Act. These amendments, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), reflect the changing concept of disabilities and the role of society in meeting the needs of individuals who have special needs. Of particular importance is the addition of the requirements for transition services, which focus on the successful movement of students from school to community, thus emphasizing the functional skills of independent living and community participation.

Moreover, the preferred descriptor, *disability*, should not be used as a label, as in "he or she is a 'learning disabled' or 'mentally retarded' child." Rather, as a way of accentuating the personhood of the individual, expressions should be used such as "the individual with learning disabilities." In this way, the disability is seen as merely one aspect or part of a total individual, thus minimizing the placement of undue emphasis on the disability by others and by the person, while at the same time emphasizing the person in all his or her myriad dimensions.

The concept of the least restrictive environment (LRE) shapes the placement options for implementation of each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). LRE led to the implementation of a continuum of educational placements and services—from placement in a regular or mainstreamed class as the least restrictive of possible environments to the most restrictive environment in a nonpublic residential or institutional setting. Central to individual decisions, however, is the fundamental premise that placement within this continuum should be shaped by the concept central to special education; namely, that the primary determinants are the individualized needs of the students, based on the idiosyncratic nature of their disabilities.

Although mainstreaming was, at its inception, identified as the least restrictive or the most normalized school environment, it has not always been successfully realized in practice. Too often, needed support services have not been provided to mainstreamed students and their teachers, and inordinate emphasis has been placed on location of service rather than on effective and efficient instructional practices. Teachers assigned to mainstreamed classes, more often than not, were ill-prepared pedagogically and psychologically to teach their students with special educational needs on either an individual or a group basis. Invariably, the curriculum was not modified to reflect the needs of integrated special students who required instruction in practical knowledge and skills taught from a functional perspective and with a functional purpose. Functional curricular modifications, if they had been assiduously pursued, might have benefited the students without disabilities as well. Typically, the curriculum of education is test driven, which can result in time wasted on the teaching of atomized and irrelevant knowledge.

In recent years, however, the concept of mainstreaming has been redefined as part of the inclusion movement or the Regular Education Initiative (REI). The REI maintains that a dual system of regular and special education is unnecessary, inappropriate, and ineffective, and that students with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability, can and should be educated in an inclusive setting. This service delivery approach rejects the continuum-of-services concept and views all other alternate placements, except the regular or mainstreamed class, as too restrictive. The collaborative teaching movement emanates from the REI and attempts to respond to some of the problems that resulted from more restrictive placements and misguided mainstreaming. The collaborative approach requires regular and special teachers to work as a team as they plan for and implement instruction for all the students they teach. As the collaborative approach is increasingly being utilized, it is necessary for all teachers, regular and special, to modify the existing regular class curriculum so that it addresses the adaptive behavioral needs of all students, whether they have disabilities or not.

This curriculum is meant for teachers who function within a special setting and for collaborative teams of teachers as they analyze and modify existing curricula, subsequently design individualized curricula (Individualized Education Programs [IEPs] and Individualized Family Service Plans [IFSPs]), and cooperate with other human service professionals and related human service agencies to meet the life needs of regular as well as special students.

Curricular areas have also changed consistently with standards-based reform. For example, social competency has received greater hegemony and vocational education, often associated with skill development and traditional “shop” programs, is now often defined in terms of work readiness, supported employment, and career education. Curricula in the area of leisure education have also gained prominence—a justified development given that free time continues to increase for most people in our culture. The problem of meaningful utilization of leisure time, especially for older people with disabilities, is particularly acute because many are chronically unemployed or underemployed, and therefore not only have expanded free time but also lack the financial resources required for the productive use of that time.

Safety, as a curricular link to functional skills, has also gained increasing recognition, especially as more and more programs emphasize community-based education, which results in greater threats to safety than the traditional, classroom-based approach. Safety and health elements should pervade all curricular areas and therefore have been included, when appropriate, in the lesson plans and learning activities of this fourth edition.

An important benchmark occurred in January of 2002 when President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 which brought in a sweeping reform to close the achievements gap between disabled, disadvantaged, and minority students and their peers. These crystallized a consensus on the importance of providing an education for students with disabilities which emphasized meaningful outcomes.

Unserved, underserved, and increasing populations of children with disabilities continue to enter educational programs at a rapid rate. These changes mandate the provision of comprehensive early intervention and family services for infants and toddlers and their families from birth through age 2. School programs are also now serving children and youth with disabilities who were not often identified in the 1970s and whose numbers have drastically increased in the 1990s. Examples include children with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and those who have been damaged prenatally (or perinatally) through maternal substance abuse and the AIDS virus.

Technology continues to play an increasingly important role in educational practice. The instructional use of the personal computer and other instructional technology (including interactive television) is increasing at a rapidly accelerating rate. The use of technology has proven to be of considerable assistance in planning (development of IEPs), in managing teaching (recording of formal and informal assessment data), and in communicating with parents (progress reports and report cards). The

personal computer, with its capacity for miniaturization, adaptations, and peripherals, is also moving rapidly to address the habilitative needs of individuals with disabilities. In the near future, as a result of research with neuromuscular feedback and computers, we can expect some individuals who cannot walk—to walk. Other technological advances will make it possible for those who cannot see—to see in some fashion, and those who cannot hear—to hear in some way from implant devices and through yet unknown technologies. The use of assistive technology will also expand as continuing efforts are made to assist students in meeting the demands of an increasingly complex and demanding postindustrial society.

The role of parents (or parent surrogates) is essential to the implementation of this curriculum. Parental participation in decisions regarding placement, IEPs, and frequency of related services is essential to a holistic approach to educating exceptional children. The parental role in providing pertinent information to teachers should not be minimized, because parents can provide information that is essential for assisting in identifying goals and objectives, establishing educational and programming priorities, and determining areas of interest. Parents have a unique advantage in instructing their children in activities that are best introduced and practiced in the home setting and also in the community. Parents can also serve as effective carry-over agents who provide practice sessions and reinforce newly acquired skills as the child performs them within his or her reality contexts.

Because of these various trends and factors, it seems appropriate to now produce a new edition of the curriculum. Teams of teachers, students, parents, clinicians, and other related service staff have been surveyed to find out what needed to be addressed in these four new volumes. Our overriding goal continues to be the presentation of new information and material that will assist teachers, other professionals, and parents in facilitating the functional performance of children and youth with disabilities in the full variety of life situations and contexts. As in past incarnations, the present curriculum assumes that the reader possesses a basic understanding of teaching methods and a fundamental level of expertise in analyzing educational tasks so that they may be used as a framework for evaluating the child's current level of performance and as a means of focusing on specific behaviors requiring remedial or instructional attention. Emphasis continues to be placed on teaching students in authentic situations in the home, community, and workplace. Whenever home-based or community-based education is not feasible, teachers must provide realistic classroom simulations that offer students with disabilities opportunities to practice life skills in functional contexts and settings. The past successes of the curriculum have supported our view that reality contexts can be effectively simulated in a classroom setting only if the entire behavior is demonstrated with all its applicable dimensions (psychomotor, affective, and cognitive) expressed as a total, integrated act.

Long-range goals and indicators, as well as specific teaching objectives, have been identified in this edition as “curriculum goals” and “specific objectives” to indicate their relationship to the development and subsequent revisions of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Although we have provided readers with suggested activities viewed from an age and grade-level perspective, readers applying the curriculum must appreciate the essential relationship between informal and formal assessment data and the decisions they make as to the relevant goals and objectives to be addressed. Although specific objectives have generally been placed in their developmental sequence, known sequences have been considered only if they make functional sense. Developmental milestones and traditional educational tasks have been deemphasized and eliminated from this curriculum if the identified behavior does not contribute to functional success for the intended population (e.g., drawing a geometric shape or matching wooden blocks of different colors). Furthermore, developmental profiles are less important as children get older, whereas they are central for infants and toddlers.

The curriculum is intended as a guide not only for individuals with disabilities but also for individuals who may be experiencing learning problems but who have not

been classified as having a disability. In fact, many high-level goals and suggested activities are included to encourage program implementors not to have restricted or limiting views. There are many nondisabled students and adults, students and adults with mild disabilities, and students and adults with no formally identified disability who are functioning at a lower-than-expected level who would also benefit from the activities in the curriculum. These high-level goals and suggested activities are also meant to guide inclusive and collaborating teachers in their modification of regular curricula, which should do much to make inclusion more successful for both the students who have disabilities and for those who do not.

As with past editions, this new edition has been designed as a guide to preservice and inservice teachers and other professionals who work directly as service providers to children and adults with disabilities. Parents, surrogates and foster parents, and other family members, as well as service coordinators (case managers), house parents in group homes/apartments or other alternate living arrangements, and counselors in community based centers, activity centers, and workshops should find this curriculum valuable as they interact with and instruct the individuals with whom they work and/or live.

The original curriculum also has had wide acceptance and use as a text for preservice teacher candidates and inservice teachers taking courses in curriculum development and teaching methods in special education at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The current edition has been updated to reflect the present needs of students taking these courses, especially as they interact in diverse practical experiences with previously unserved and underserved populations of individuals with disabilities.

New to this edition is the instrument *Assessing and Monitoring Progress of Functional Skills* (AMPFS). AMPFS is the starting point for this curriculum and enables point in time recording of students' needs and progress. The instrument measures movement toward mastery for each of the curriculum's identified goals and objectives.

The lists of Selected Materials/Resources attached to each unit is relatively brief because many of the essential materials needed in teaching a functional curriculum are the ordinary materials of life that are invariably found in the home, school, community, and workplace, and because well-designed and well-presented teacher-made materials are usually more appropriate, better focused, and more motivating to students.

The Suggested Readings appended to each unit list not only recent publications but some older, classic materials as well. These classics have been included because they retain their immediacy and appropriateness and thus should not be automatically eliminated from lists of relevant professional literature out of a passion for newness.

This new edition of the curriculum continues to provide information and suggestions that have proven to be of value in the past. The suggested activities provided in this new edition, a direct response to user recommendations and reviews, have been separated into two major categories: Teacher Interventions and Family Interventions. Further, four distinct age/grade levels for each of these interventions have been developed to reflect content deemed appropriate for the following levels: infant and toddler/preschool, primary, intermediate, and secondary. The suggested activities for the infant and toddler/preschool level are meant to meet the functional needs of infants and toddlers (birth through 2 years) and preschool children (3 through 5 years). Additionally, attention needs to be directed to the several alternative settings for teaching children, especially where infants and toddlers are concerned, because they are frequently educated in their own homes and in daycare settings.

Finally, this curriculum does not address all the dimensions of a functional curriculum because to do so is neither practical nor possible. It does not provide all the possible instructional activities that are applicable or would be interesting and motivating to students and adults with disabilities. It does, however, provide a structure and format from which a creative professional can extrapolate additional instructional goals and objectives, design learning activities, and suggest possible responses to the multitude of challenging questions that will arise from the actual implementation of the curriculum.