



# Systematic Instruction of Functional Skills for Students and Adults With Disabilities

By Keith Storey, Craig Miner

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This text is a clear and current description of the instructional strategies that can be immediately applied across age groups and disability labels. An evidence-based instructional methodology is provided, which has proved to be effective in teaching skills to students and adults with disabilities. Signature topics include: (1) a community-referenced functional curriculum; (2) how to assess and analyze skills; (3) teaching skills; (4) functional academics; (5) teaching employment skills; (6) functional skills in community; (7) functional skills in residential settings; (8) teaching social skills; (9) self-determination and self-advocacy skills; and (10) self-management skills. Each chapter includes Key Point Questions, Windows to the World Case Studies, Best Practice Recommendations, Future Research Issues, Discussion Questions, and School and Community-based Activity Suggestions to illustrate, extend and clarify a systematic approach to improving the functional skills of individuals with disabilities. These features allow the reader to explore and apply effective instructional strategies across domains such as employment, community, residential as well as the skills necessary to enjoy recreation and leisure opportunities. The most unique feature is that it is written specifically for practitioners in the field, not for academics. The format, readability, and detailed description of instructional methodology make it a valued resource for instructors responsible for improving the skills of learners with disabilities.

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- Sales Rank: #1189046 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Charles C Thomas Pub Ltd
- Published on: 2011-03-11
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 9.75" h x 7.00" w x .50" l, 1.35 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 250 pages

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### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

Recently, I spent some time in a high school classroom for students with moderate to intensive disabilities. Daily instruction in the classroom consisted of presenting these high schoolers with significantly modified curricula grounded in traditional, grade-level State Standards. The teacher and assistants were attempting to expose students to content that same-age peers were accessing; however, staff had been questioning the appropriateness and relevance of this content for the students and wondered how this content would affect student performance and independence post-graduation. This scenario seems to be a fairly representative occurrence in high schools throughout the country as teachers attempt to balance state standards with more pertinent and functional curriculums as warranted for particular learners. The staff in this classroom could have tremendously benefitted from reading *Systematic Instruction of Functional Skills for Students and Adults with Disabilities*. The book is inundated with practical strategies to facilitate evidence-based instructional methodology for learners across a range of ages and needs. Throughout the book, the ten chapters are organized with key point questions to systematically preview chapter content. Faculty could use these questions as a formative assessment for students in higher education when beginning coverage of the chapters. The key point questions are followed by relevant and interesting case studies that provide practical examples of best practices for service providers. Both the questions and case studies could easily facilitate and shape guided discussions in a higher education classroom.

The first chapter addresses critical features of community-referenced functional curriculum, such as age appropriateness, simulation and in vivo instruction, and quality of life outcomes. The chapter discusses how to select curricular skill domains to ensure their practical utility, an incredibly important consideration when designing programming for individuals with disabilities. The authors address the philosophical underpinnings of systematic instruction with a focus on skill acquisition that will be useful for students in both their immediate and future environments. Chapter two provides an overview of how to assess and analyze skills to include task analysis, chains of behavior, methods for collecting direct observation data, and generalization of learned behaviors. The content included in chapter two is applicable to any type of service provider or researcher interested in how to break a task into components, accurately define target behaviors, and collect data to guide instructional decision making. As is consistent throughout the book, the chapter concludes with best practice recommendations, discussion questions, and activity suggestions. In a higher education environment, this format would be ideal to provide a summary and elicit practice opportunities to reinforce learned content. Additionally, future research issues are included that could provide a foundation for those interested in extending the literature on the topic areas.

Chapter three focuses on teaching skills to students with disabilities with specific insight into problem solving for students having difficulty with learning steps of tasks. The chapter addresses seminal programming considerations such as prompt fading and reinforcement. Further, the authors carefully address the difference between cues and corrections, verbiage that is often used interchangeably and inaccurately out in the field. The why, where, what, and how of functional academics is covered in chapter four and teaching employment skills is covered at length in chapter five. Numerous tables are embedded throughout as a reference guide with quick and helpful tips for applied practitioners. In addition, the tables could be used in the higher education setting --Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly

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