

The second step is to describe in some detail what the students *without* disabilities will do to participate in the instructional routine. Mr. Becker said that students will demonstrate their participation by sitting quietly in their seats, looking back and forth between the overhead projector and their notebooks, and writing key points of the lecture in a spiral bound notebook. They might raise their hands and ask a question. Each of these participation (“what students do”) behaviors is written in column two.

The third step in the planning process is for the team to discuss whether Amanda can participate in the lecture and note-taking routine in the *same* way as other students or if she will need an *alternate* way to participate. The special education teacher remarked that Amanda can sit in the same kind of seat as the other students but her position in the classroom needs to be individualized because of her vision difficulties. The paraprofessional suggested that Amanda will need an accommodation in order to meet the “sit quietly” expectation in the form of a planned break mid-way through the lecture. The occupational therapist recommended that Amanda have a laptop computer or i-Pad with customized software, as she has neither the fine motor skills nor the written vocabulary to take useful notes using a pencil. The speech-language pathologist said that Amanda might benefit from an aided-language board (Beck, 2002) to support her to ask questions about the lecture topic.

When thinking about alternate means of participation, it is important that teams adhere to the maxim “only as special as necessary” (Giangreco, 2001, p. 13). Alternate means of participation need to reflect strong alignment with general education curriculum standards and maximum involvement in general education instruction led by the general education teacher. Where appropriate, the “alternate” notation is recorded in column three. To complete column four, the team members discussed details of the individualized supports that Amanda needed in order to fully participate in the column entries marked *alternate*. Entries in column four included sitting in the front of the room so she can see the overhead projector, having a three-minute break mid-way through the lecture, having a dedicated laptop computer or i-Pad, using Co:Writer6© (Johnston, 2012) to take notes, and using an aided language board to support question-asking.

The fifth column recorded what the team members will do in order to prepare the supports so that they will be ready for Amanda to use during the “teacher lectures, students take note” routines. Column five showed that the special education teacher will make sure that Mr. Becker knows that Amanda must sit in the front row. The special education teacher will model for the paraprofessional how to support Amanda to take a scheduled break. The special education teacher will also assure that a dedicated laptop or i-Pad is specified as an accommodation in Amanda’s IEP. The speech-language pathologist will load the writing software on the laptop or i-Pad and both she and the occupational therapist will teach the paraprofessional how to support Amanda to use it. With input from the science teacher about the vocabulary that will be used during this unit, the paraprofessional will make an aided-language board with guidance from the special education teacher.

The team will evaluate the fidelity of implementation of these supports by using a checklist that describes each strategy and then rates its level of implementation using a scale consisting of 1 (not implemented), 2 (partially implemented), or 3 (fully implemented). If all supports are not rated a “3,” the team discusses and implements strategies for improving the accuracy (i.e., implementing it correctly) and consistency (i.e., doing it accurately each and every time) of the support (Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier, 2010, p. 216-219).

If these supports are provided with fidelity then the team has a high degree of confidence that Amanda's performance reflects her true capabilities. If supports are not provided with fidelity then the team will need to defer their assessment of what Amanda has learned and work to improve the quality of supports (Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier, 2010).

Key Components of the Beyond Access Instructional Planning Process

Having High Expectations for All Students

The Beyond Access instructional planning process is grounded in the least dangerous assumption of presumed competence. Judgments about students' capacity for learning or their performance are deferred until teams can demonstrate that they are providing instruction and supports with high fidelity (Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier, 2010). The positive impact of teacher expectations on student performance has been demonstrated in many research studies over the past 50 years (Merton, 1948; Rolison & Medway, 1985), and high expectations are encoded in IDEA. A challenge arises when students with more significant disabilities are not presently able to show what they know by speaking, writing, or typing. Jorgensen, McSheehan, and Sonnenmeier (2007) and many other researchers have shown that having high expectations of these students is the least dangerous assumption that can be made about their abilities (Biklen & Duchon, 1994; Donnellan, 1984; Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier, 2007; Kasa-Hendrickson, 2005).

Even if students never show that they have mastered all that they have been taught, it is far more dangerous to presume that students will never learn and then find out that they might have, had they been provided with high quality instruction and assistive technology to support their communication and literacy skills (Jorgensen, 2005). Furthermore, many studies of the academic performance of students with significant disabilities have shown that many more students than ever thought possible can learn academic knowledge and skills when they are provided with high quality instruction and assistive technology within a general education classroom (Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2009; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2010).

Planning for Participation in Typical Instructional Routines

Many teams believe that effective inclusion requires them to plan for each and every lesson that will be taught in the general education classroom. When the number of students needing such intensive supports is multiplied by the number of classes in which they are enrolled and by the number of lessons taught in each class, it is no wonder that teachers report burn-out and some students do not have the supports they need. This would be an almost impossible task for even the most dedicated teachers. Planning for instructional routines is a way to make the supports planning process more efficient as most teachers use a predictable number of instructional routines throughout a typical week or semester, based on our observations over 50 years of teaching experience.. This concept is consistent with the Participation Model of assessment and intervention in augmentative and alternative communication promoted by Beukelman and Mirenda (2005), and extends the partial participation model promoted by Baumgart et al. (1982). Some of these routines include:

- Teacher lectures, students take notes

- Teacher facilitates large group discussion (whether at the kindergarten calendar or in the high school honors seminar), students provide information and make comments
- Students complete worksheets or do other independent writing at their desks
- Students manipulate laboratory or cooking equipment
- Students work in cooperative learning groups
- Students use a word processor for online research or writing

We have found that when teams plan for these instructional routines, similar adaptations and supports can be used across subject areas or units of instruction. For example, Amanda needs fill-in-the-blank worksheets to practice language arts and science vocabulary words, social studies definitions, and specialized terms used in horticulture. These worksheets need to be typed in 24 point font, with black letters on yellow background, displaying four questions per page. Once a worksheet template has been designed specifically for Amanda (fill-in-the-blank worksheet templates are available in the Microsoft Office software package) then the specific questions and answers related to a particular subject area can be typed into the template to create multiple worksheets without “reinventing the wheel” each and every time such a worksheet is needed. If these templates are saved in digital form they can be endlessly adapted not only for Amanda but for other students as well.

Grounding the Process in What Students without Disabilities are Doing

When students with significant disabilities were first included in general education classes in the mid-1980’s, the instructional planning process typically began by asking “Where are the opportunities throughout the day in the general education classroom for John to work on his IEP goals?” (Giangreco, Cloninger, & Iverson, 1993). Many teachers found opportunities in science for students to work on categorization, opportunities in language arts to work on vocabulary, and opportunities in math to work on money and time skills. What resulted, however, were some negative unintended consequences. In many instances students were physically present in a general education class working on a similar academic skill, but not truly engaged with the rest of the class. Beginning the inclusive instructional planning process with what is expected of students *without* disabilities helps to assure that students with disabilities will be connected to the general education curriculum, general education instruction, and their classmates without disabilities.

Planning for Tomas’ Participation in Self-Selected Reading

To respond to Tomas’ kindergarten teacher’s concerns, his team met weekly to plan instructional supports that would allow him to participate in self-selected reading. Using the Beyond Access routines-based planning process and form, the team analyzed the self-selected reading routine (Figure 2).