

### **TEACHING THE FUNCTIONAL ACADEMICS CURRICULUM**

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#### **COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL SKILLS**

Communication should be the foundation of every good special education program. It is impossible to determine exactly what a student knows if he or she is unable to communicate. It is also extremely difficult to foster good social skills if a student does not have a functional communication system.

The Styer-Fitzgerald Program for Functional Academics is an academic-based program designed to teach students the skills needed to be as independent as possible once they leave the school system. The instructional approach taken throughout the program incorporates basic Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) procedures including prompting, correction, and reinforcement guidelines used to work on single, discrete skills. Specific “lessons” in communication and social skills are therefore not included because it is not appropriate to work on them for short, isolated time periods. Rather, communication and social skills should be worked on throughout the day, all day long. However, development of social and communication skills still can be integrated with the Styer-Fitzgerald Program. Each teacher will find ways of doing so based on knowledge of his or her own students. For some specific ideas about how you and your SLP can work together using the Styer-Fitzgerald Program, please see the Community-Based Training section and Student Portfolio.

#### **TEACHING STRATEGIES**

As mentioned, the teaching procedures used in each lesson are based on ABA strategies. The Teaching Strategies section contains approaches for using systematic instruction, including prompting and errorless learning, correction and reinforcement procedures. For in-depth information about using ABA strategies, a recommended resource is *Applied Behavior Analysis for Teachers*, by Alberto and Troutman.

Found in the Curriculum Teaching Guide (page 4)