


# Choice Making and Goal Setting

Kentucky Peer Service  
Learning Training  
February 14, 2003



# Choice Making

- Making a choice =
  - Indicating a preference
  - Between two or more options

# Barriers to choice making for students with significant disabilities

- Students have few opportunities to learn about preferences based on personal experiences.
- Students with communication impairments may not be able to express preferences in traditional ways.
  - Problem behavior as an expression of preference.
- Educators and family members have not conducted a systematic analysis of preferences.
- Students with intensive support needs may need to learn how to make a choice.
  - May have learned “other” means of expressing preferences or making choices.

# Strategies to assess preferences

- Observing student responses:
  - Activation of microswitch.
  - Approach toward an object.
  - Verbalizations, gestures, and affect.
  - Physical selection of an item.
  - Time engaged with object/in activity.
- Analogue assessment procedures
  - Set up opportunities for students to select from 2 objects.
  - Vary sequence in which options are available.
  - Repeat options in different pairings.
  - Record frequency of selection of options.

# Choice Making (continued)

- People's preferences change. Just because a student liked something at one time doesn't mean he or she will like it at another time.
  - Assess frequently.

# Promoting choice-making: Integrating choices into teaching

- incorporating student choice as an early step in the instructional process;
- increasing the number of choices related to a given activity which the student makes;
- increasing the number of domains in which decisions are made;
- raising the significance in terms of risk and long-term consequences of the choices which the student makes; and
- clear communication with the student concerning areas of possible choice, and the limits within which choices can be made (Shevin & Klein, 1984, pp. 164).

# Promoting choice-making: Integrating choices into teaching

7 ways to infuse choices into instructional activities (Brown, Appel, Corsi and Wenig, 1993)

- Choosing within an activity;
- Choosing between two or more activities;
- Choosing when to do an activity;
- Selecting the person with whom to participate in an activity;
- Choosing where to do an activity;
- Choosing not to participate in a planned activity;
- Choosing to end an activity at a self-selected time

# Goal Setting and Attainment

- Goal setting theory is built on the underlying assumption that goals are regulators of human action.

# Goal setting and attainment

- Instructional efforts to promote goal setting and attainment should focus on:
  - Goal identification and enunciation
  - Developing objectives to meet goals;
  - Identifying actions necessary to achieve goals;
  - Tracking and following progress on goals.
- Participation in educational planning and decision-making as ideal generalization mechanism.

# Supporting Goal Setting

- Peers/Teachers can help students with intensive support needs go through a step-by-step process to set an instructional or other goal.
- The key is not necessarily that the student with intensive support needs complete each step independently, but that peers/teachers provide supports and scaffolding to enable the student to remain at the center of the process.

# What is my goal?

1. What do I want to learn?
  - Peer/Teacher Support Objectives
    - Enable student to identify strengths and instructional needs.
    - Enable students to communicate preferences, interests, beliefs and values.
    - Support students to prioritize needs.

# What is my goal?

2. What do I know about it now?
  - Peer/Teacher Support Objectives
    - Enable student to identify his or her current status in relation to the instructional need.
    - Assist student to gather information about opportunities and barriers in his or her environment.

# What is my goal?

3. What must change for me to learn what I don't know?
  - Peer/Teacher Support Objectives
    - Enable students to decide if action will be focused toward capacity building, modifying the environment, or both.
    - Support students to choose a need to address from the prioritized list.

# What is my goal?

4. What can I do to make this happen?
  - Peer/Teacher Support Objectives
    - Teach students to state a goal and identify criteria for achieving goal.

# Setting Goals: Implementation

- In teaching goal setting, emphasize that:
  - It is important to set goals that are attainable.
  - Goals should be measurable.
  - Goals should have objectives (steps).
  - There should be a timeline for starting and completing the goal.
  - Develop goals in terms of expected outcomes.