

Third Edition

Systematic Instruction of Functional Skills for Students and Adults with Disabilities



Keith Storey
Ph.D., BCBA-D

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FUNCTIONAL SKILLS FOR STUDENTS
AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES**

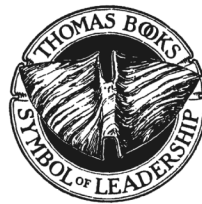
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AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES**

By

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I dedicate this book to Rob Horner who has been an exemplary teacher, role model, mentor, writer, editor, and for my money the greatest researcher in the special education/disability/education/ABA fields. His research has included Functional Assessment, Positive Behavior Supports, School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports, Supported Living, Supported Employment, General Case Programming, Single Case Research Designs, Applied Behavior Analysis, Social Networks, Instructional Methodology, and Community Instruction. Not only has his research and writing been extensive but it has also been extremely meaningful and of the highest quality. Through his work he has positively impacted the lives of many people. Thanks, Rob!

PREFACE

This book provides an overview of systematic instructional strategies and is written in a format so that teachers and other service providers can immediately put the information to use. I have tried to write informatively regarding systematic instruction components, such as task analysis, prompts, error correction, etc., as well as specifically for different instructional domains such as school, employment, community, and residential. This book is focused upon instructional strategies for individuals with disabilities (school age and adults). It is generic across age groups as well as disability labels and should be of interest to those working in the schools as well as those in transition and adult service settings. I have tried to write for practitioners rather than other academics and have tried to use as little jargon and technical language as possible. I have purposefully kept references to a minimum though I have included some so that interested readers can use them for further education. In the chapters, I have deliberately included “older” and “classic” references that I see as being both important and relevant today, as well as to provide an understanding of how this field of has built upon research for establishing the basis of systematic instruction. In addition, I have included a reference section on the research that is focused on the topic of that chapter.

In this book, each chapter follows the sequence of:

- Key point questions.
- Window to the world case studies.
- Discussion questions.
- School and community-based activity suggestions.
- References cited in chapter.
- Empirical research to support that the interventions discussed are evidence-based practices.
- General references regarding topics in chapter.

This book is focused on improving instructional practices and outcomes for students and adults with disabilities. All too often the assumption is that students and adults have reached their “potential” and they become stuck in

a place or setting because of a lack of skills on their part due to the poor instruction that they have received. Practitioners may understand the importance of placing individuals in different settings (such as inclusive classrooms or supported employment sites) but not understand how to improve their skills and provide appropriate supports once they are in that setting. This book is intended to give teachers and other service providers the instructional skills for improving the skills of the individuals that they are serving.

The rubber meets the road in how to teach. Though issues such as inclusion, positive behavior supports, least restrictive environment, and collaboration are certainly extremely important, how to teach individuals with disabilities is the foundation on which special education services are based. The most unique feature of the text is that it is written specifically for practitioners in the field (teachers and adult service providers) as well as those in training. An advantage of this book is that those preparing teachers and others can easily use it in methods courses as it covers instructional methodology that is seldom covered in detail in most texts. College instructors are likely to choose this book based upon:

- a. The consistent format throughout the book.
- b. The “readability” of the book.
- c. The comprehensive coverage of systematic instruction.
- d. The direct applicability to applied settings.

In addition to college instructors, I believe that others providing instruction, supervision, and training to direct service providers will find this book useful.

K.S.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Chapter</i>	
1. Community-Referenced Functional Curriculum	3
2. How to Assess and Analyze Skills	28
3. Teaching Skills	56
4. Self-Determination And Self-Advocacy Skills	88
5. Functional Academics	113
6. Teaching Employment Skills	131
7. Functional Skills in Community Settings	156
8. Functional Skills in Residential Settings	182
9. Teaching Social Skills	203
10. Self-Management Skills	230
<i>Appendix of Resources</i>	249
<i>Author Index</i>	263
<i>Subject Index</i>	277
<i>About the Author</i>	280

**SYSTEMATIC INSTRUCTION OF
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Chapter 1

COMMUNITY-REFERENCED FUNCTIONAL CURRICULUM

Key Point Questions

1. What should you teach?
2. What are functional skills?
3. What are scope and sequence considerations?
4. What are lifestyle routines, functional skill sequences, and skill specific analyses?
5. What is the relationship between systematic instruction of functional skills and integration/inclusion?
6. What is the criterion of ultimate functioning?
7. What is age appropriateness?
8. What is the competence-deviance hypothesis?
9. What is partial participation?
10. What are simulation and in vivo instruction?
11. What is normalization?
12. What are quality of life outcomes?
13. What are Evidence Based Practices?

Window to the World Case Study One

Eldred is a kindergarten student who has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Eldred engages in a lot of strange behaviors such as jumping up and down, flapping his hands, repeating phrases (such as “how are you?”) over and over, spinning toys, and placing items (such as crayons) in a row. His peers and teacher find these behaviors rather odd and are not always sure about how to respond to them. Generally they ignore them though his teacher, Ms.

Rittgers will interrupt the behaviors when Eldred needs to follow the class routine such as going to the circle, lining up for recess, or going a play station area. Though Eldred is not happy with the interruption he generally is compliant to what his teacher wants.

Eldred is very curious about what his peers are doing and will watch them and sometimes join in their games if he likes the activity. However, he is not always aware of what the rules are for playing or doing group work and he will sometimes be corrected or reprimanded by the teacher or peers and when this happens he puts his head down and will refuse to be involved any further.

His inclusion specialist, Ms. Seibert, recognizes that this is a very important point in time for Eldred to develop positive relationships and social networks with his peers and that teaching Eldred specific play skills and social skills will be critical. She decides upon a two-pronged strategy. First, she does a short social skills intervention with Eldred at the start of school. This occurs for about five minutes and involves a brief discussion of why the skill they will work on (such as how to respond positively when being corrected by the teacher) is important, each of them role play a positive way to respond (say “okay” and follow the direction) and then an incorrect way (putting one’s head down), feedback on the performance, and then reinforcement (praise from Ms. Seibert and reading a favorite story book together).

The second method is a brief role playing each day in class about a difficult social interaction and how to handle it. This is for all the students in the class and thus Eldred is not singled out (Eldred is not the only one with social interaction difficulties). The students rotate through different situations and role play with Ms. Rittgers or Ms. Seibert. This is a fun activity that all the students enjoy (the teachers make some of the situations a bit humorous) and the students all enjoy the role playing and benefit from it. Indeed, it has made their social interactions in class and in the school and at home more positive. For Eldred, he has gained many positive social interaction skills and has developed friendships with many of his peers at school and now they often get together outside of school as well.

Window to the World Case Study Two

Kristin is a twenty-five-year-old adult who has been diagnosed as having a Learning Disability and ADHD. Kristin barely graduated

from high school, did not go to college, and has had many jobs over the years. Most of these jobs have not lasted long. She loses jobs because employers tell her what to do and assume that she understands how to do the tasks without any real instruction (e.g., do this filing). Because of her ADHD Kristin also has trouble remembering the sequence in which to do tasks (e.g., do the filing, then the mail, then check the stocking of supplies, then cover the phone for Yukari when she is on a break or at lunch).

Kristin has sometimes been homeless or living with her friends. She has received some social services but often has difficulty navigating their forms and bureaucracies and thus only sporadically receives actual supports.

Recently, Kristin's friend Dawn has the two of them sign up for classes at their local community college. Dawn helped Kristin to access the Disabled Students and Program Services on campus. As part of these services, Kristin has started receiving On-The-Job supports with Job Coach, Michal, who has performed a thorough job analysis at the new job that Kristin has just started. Michal uses a variety of systematic instructional procedures such as task analysis, self-management strategies, general case instructional strategies, and positive reinforcement to teach and support Kristin. For the first time Kristin feels positive about how she is doing at work and her supervisor is pleased with her performance.

Key Point Question 1: What Should You Teach?

Independence, productivity, and inclusion are valued outcomes for all individuals with disabilities. The opportunity to live, be educated, and participate in inclusive settings contributes to the development of skills that enhance community functioning and attainment of meaningful outcomes. However, beyond opportunity, it is important to recognize the critical importance of effective instruction and the difference that it can make in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Without effective instruction, it is doubtful that individuals will develop their ultimate potential for successful quality of life outcomes. Modifications (changes in the delivery, content, or instructional level of subject matter or tests) and accommodations (provide different ways for students to take in information or communicate their knowledge back to the teacher) are important, especially in inclusive educational settings. However, even

with appropriate modifications and accommodations, learners need to acquire skills which will be useful in their immediate and future environments. As noted by Downing and Demchak (2002), all students and adults with disabilities can benefit from direct and systematic instruction and for some learners, this type of instruction is essential. No matter how many accommodations or modifications may be made, without systematic or direct instruction of skills, some learners may be unable to acquire new skills and information. By systematic instruction I mean instructional procedures that involve antecedent and consequence manipulations, frequent assistance to the learner (e.g., cues), immediate correction procedures, and direct and ongoing measurement that are designed to increase specific skills (e.g., behaviors) for the learner. There are certainly many other instructional and academic issues that are important for learners with disabilities and there are a variety of instructional methodologies that can be effective (Browder & Spooner, 2006; Steinle, Stevens, & Vaughn, in press; Wanzek, Vaughn, Scammacca, Metz, Murray, Roberts, & Danielson, 2013; Wood, 2002) and I do not intend to marginalize or trivialize their importance. However, the focus of this book is on directly teaching functional skills through systematic instruction procedures. I would also like to emphasize here that systematic instruction is “evidence based” and there is an extensive empirical base for the effectiveness of these procedures for teaching new skills (Iovannone, Dunlap, Huber, & Kincaid, 2003; Lee, Chun, Hama, & Carter, 2018; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003).

Independence, productivity, and integration are all based upon individuals having skills necessary to be competent in specific situations (e.g., getting along with other students, shopping for groceries, interacting with co-workers, cooking meals, etc.). For many learners, such competence is not acquired incidentally. In other words, the emphasis of instruction must be to develop competence (Gold, 1980) to function in school, employment settings, residential environments, community living situations, and recreational/leisure activities. Thus, curriculum content and skill selection needs to be referenced to one (or more) of these domains.

Key Point Question 2: What are Functional Skills?

“What to teach?” is the initial question that needs to be addressed when making instructional decisions involving students and adults with disabilities. Although in school settings specific curriculum content