

Functional Academics - Think Globally

We need to **think globally** and long term when looking at academic subjects for our students. If we continue to ask ourselves: "how will our student actually use this skill in his/her adult life and at home", this will help us to create functional opportunities to practice functional skills. The following are some examples...

Time

How will our student use the concept of time? The calendar could be adapted into something more like a social calendar or adult day planner. The focus would be to count days or weeks before a special event occurs. You could also ask sequencing questions such as: "which birthday will come first?" or "what happens after the Halloween party"? Once again, we are emphasizing conversational skills within this calendar routine.



Money

How will our student use the concept of money? Some students may not understand coin or dollar values but need to learn that something is exchanged when we go to a store to buy something (e.g., credit card, coins, bills). Short but meaningful conversation can occur with the use of a simple communication device (e.g., "Hi. How are you today? How much do I owe you? Thanks".) These routines should be practiced so that the individual is not prompt dependent later on as an adult in the community.



Measurement/Counting

Cooking is often a great way to ask questions and reinforce numeracy in real life activities that are also very motivating. (Remember that food is often a motivator for many of our students.) All of our student's skills can be incorporated into a weekly cooking activity. This makes math concepts real for our student. S/he can work on core vocabulary such as more/less, full/empty, finish/start, in/out, etc.



Language Arts Reading/Letter Recognition/Comprehension

What might this look like for our student as an adult? Can s/he sit and have a conversation about a book, movie or activity, with a friend? Perhaps over time our student can also learn to recognize some familiar signs around the community. This can be incorporated into a communication system (e.g., Dynavox, communication board, etc.) for choices or conversation, (e.g., Tim Hortons?) Check out more modified open-ended activities such as using conversation in surveys with a Step-by-Step Communicator or Tap Speak Sequence.



Art

Replace paintbrushes or pencils with larger objects such as sponges or other tools so our student will be able to participate in art activities with less hand over hand (experience more independence).



PE

Think about giving our student a role within the gym activity. This is demonstrated when the PE teacher in the photo below, gave this student a role of volleying the volleyball to the person who was serving it over the net.

This student has a job to "set up" the ball for the server in this volley ball game.

