**Life Skills: Math Curriculum**

**Statement of Purpose:**

Those of us who teach math to students with disabilities know that one of the hardest things to defend to our students can be math’s relevance. Often students inquire about the significance of a topic to their everyday lives and we find ourselves clamoring for the “right” answer - or at least an answer we think they may want to hear. We are caught telling them that they need it for the test more often than we tell them how they can apply it to the everyday lives.

“Life skills – typically considered ‘skills or tasks that contribute to the successful, independent functioning of an individual in adulthood’ – are judged by many scholars to be critical to the success of individuals with disabilities out of school (Bouck, 2010).” However, the once popular approach to teaching students with intellectual disabilities has been replaced with a curriculum focused on specific content standards and literacy-based approaches. A functional life skills curriculum is at odds with the current No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as the two initiatives focus on incorporating students with disabilities accountable for statewide assessments rather than equipping them with the vital tools they need to be successful professionally, financially and personally.

Students with significant disabilities who receive a course in transition planning are more likely to hold at least one job post-graduation (Miller and Chan 2008), while Benz et al. (1999) and Benz et al. (2000) found students who participated in a transition program involving life skills experienced increased graduation rates as well as higher wages overall (Bouck, 2010). Teaching life skills is an evidence based practice in secondary transition and is an invaluable component of teaching students with disabilities how to maneuver life’s ins and outs. Because of this I propose that in order to prepare students with intellectual disabilities for life after high school there needs to be an emphasis on life-skills instruction specifically in the area of mathematics.

The main goal of the Life Skills Math course I have outlined is to help students understand the elements required to apply math concepts successfully in real life scenarios. The course will utilize evidence based - instructional strategies such as project based activities, graphic organizers, and use of technology. Various evaluation strategies will also be an integral tool to assessing growth. Examples of evaluation strategies that will be implemented include: self-assessments, pre-post assessments, questionnaires, and observations. Unit objectives will be linked to Ohio Content Standards in Mathematics with an instructional focus on life skills.

**References**

Bouck, E.C. "Reports of Life skills training for students with Intellectual Disabilities in and out

of School." *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 54 (2010): 1093-103. Print.

Benz M.R., Lindstrom L. & Latta T. (1999) Improving collaboration between schools and vocational rehabilitation: the youth transition program model. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 13, 55-63

Miller S.M. & Chan F. (2008) Predictors of life satisfaction in individuals with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 52, 1039 – 47.