

Discussion Starters

The following questions are those that we found useful as a team of special educators, general educators, and measurement experts at UNC Charlotte. These were used in developing the teleconference. We hope you find these questions helpful for your teams as you discuss curriculum priorities and issues together.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Why is it the “least dangerous assumption” to give all students general curriculum content even for those for whom we have not yet discovered ways for them to show what they know?

Some people use the term making academics personally meaningful. Does this mean the same as functional?

Do academics and functional skills need to compete with each other? How do we avoid this and make sure all is meaningful and personally relevant?

ELA

The priority for all of these strands is producing and accessing text communication for quality of life. Why producing and accessing text as the focal point for setting priorities... why not just developing a communication systems?

Why is producing and accessing text is so prominent in this proposed model for setting priorities?

What is a literature based model and how important is it within language arts education?

How do both narrative and informational/ expository text relate to this priority?

There are no national standards in language arts so what should be the curricular focus for ELA?

One of the outcomes found in results from alignment studies is that states focus on reading. Is making reading the priority appropriate? Is that the same in gen ed.?

One option is for students to participate in a read aloud to gain meaning. Are read alouds with older students appropriate?

One debate that occurs nationally as teams link to reading standards is whether using read alouds and measuring listening comprehension is “reading.” It is important to make sure all students have the opportunity to gain independence as a reader including decoding text, but can’t we call gaining meaning through read alouds *alternate achievement* in reading?

Math

Should the *problem* be the focal point for setting priorities in math?

Is it appropriate for “word problems” to be the focal point for math?

Is it appropriate to build on literacy skills as a way of approaching math or that is to take a literacy approach to math?

One way to think of teaching math is that the “formula” for creating a math lesson is a story plus a task analysis for how to perform the math operation and a graphic organizer and manipulatives to compensate for any missing numeracy skills. The tricky part is to ask whether what the student is doing is still mathematics, especially for some students who may not really understand numbers yet. For these students, they will need to use matching to derive the answers. At what point does it cease being mathematics and become something else?

In math there are National Standards. How do they influence State Standards?

In trying to set priorities, do you recommend prioritizing in each content area? What happens if you decide to leave out an entire strand (e.g., algebra)?

Why not just stick with purely functional skills, those like money and measurement?

Science

Why is inquiry so important in science education?

Some science experts feel that there is the pitfall of teaching science like a foreign language. What does that mean- teaching science like a foreign language?

Some students with significant cognitive disabilities need drill with the sight words (e.g., condensation and precipitation) before they can use them to identify what process has occurred. Is this an example of poor science instruction?

What exactly is inquiry?

Wonder, marvel, appreciate are words that appear in our conceptual model/statement. Scientists are known for focusing on measurable phenomena and precision, so why do resources on science education often use words like marvel and wonder? What do these words mean to science educators?

What about teaching the idea of inquiry using a task analysis to be taught step by step? Is it still inquiry? Is this still science?

Should students with the most significant disabilities participate in Science instruction? Is this appropriate for this group of students?

