

*How to Create a Curriculum for Autistic and
Other Handicapped Children*

Raymond G. Romanczyk and Stephanie Lockshin
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(Softbound)

This manual provides a step-by-step outline of procedures that may be followed and issues that should be considered when designing an educational curriculum for autistic children. According to the authors, their proposed strategy for curriculum development is a moderate approach, balancing the important need for individualization in work with autistic children with the mandates of public laws and the usefulness of an efficient communication and organizational tool.

The manual is organized into fifteen steps that are interspersed with brief discussions of theoretical issues that are relevant to curriculum planning and implementation. Step 1 begins with a succinct outline for a behavior analysis that may be useful for educators who are interested in organizing their assessment information into a program planning framework. Important issues relating to staffing patterns, classroom organization, and educational models are discussed, and although the reviewers are in agreement with the authors on these issues, more attention to rationales for the recommendations provided may be warranted given the controversial nature of these topics within the context of traditional education.

The "how-to's" covered by this manual are most clearly specified in sections relating to: choice of content areas, functions of the curriculum, establishing sequential and parallel relationships, deciding on format and style, and writing and implementing an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). A number of clarifying examples assist lay readers in utilizing these materials. Educators will find the lists of pointers on writing style and the specification of content to be addressed in IEPs particularly useful, since few materials exist to quickly prepare school professionals to skillfully complete these tasks. Other strengths of this manual include suggestions for effective staff training strategies and an emphasis on the importance of evaluation, both in terms of strategies for documenting child progress and in terms of techniques for monitoring a program's success in teaching to priority skill areas. The authors' proposal that cost-effectiveness analyses are only meaningful in light of the positive behavior change produced by a curriculum serves as an important reminder to persons in the field of education and treatment of autistic children.

In summary, the manual presents a pragmatic yet comprehensive outline of issues important in curriculum development for autistic and other developmentally disabled persons. It will serve as a useful resource to educators in the field of autism, or to residential treatment providers who are in search of a framework for organizing behavioral programs.

Patricia J. Krantz
Gail G. McGee
Princeton Child Development Institute
Princeton, NJ

the Behavior Therapist

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