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## Introduction

Despite more than a decade of demonstration that people with severe disabilities can be successful in integrated employment settings, the prevailing continuum of segregated adult services continues to grow (Wehman and Kregel, 1994, 1995). Although several arguments for the perpetuation of segregated adult day programs and sheltered workshops have been offered (Mank, 1996), one of the most fundamental rationales for the continuance of these facilities has been the presumed inability of individuals with disabilities to master complex work and work related activities. In practice, statements such as 'She simply is not ready to work in a community job' or 'Our people graduate from the workshop into the supported employment program' are all too common. This reaction has led to a related Catch-22: because many people with severe disabilities are often excluded from supported employment programs, professionals in many such programs see little need to master complex instructional approaches. Naturally, when someone with a severe disability is allowed entrance into a community-based employment program, staff who are ill-prepared to provide quality systematic instruction may view the new individual as simply 'too disabled to work'.

The way out of this circular reasoning is through effective instructional strategies that may be used in community-based integrated work places. Our profession has a strong legacy of research and demonstration that has reasserted that people with even the most complex and severe disabilities can learn to perform new and valued activities if we provide them with effective instruction (Horner et al., 1979; Gold, 1981). As Marc Gold suggested, the degree of success of our instruc-

tion is related to the 'instructional power' that we bring to the teaching situation. This philosophy places the responsibility for success in instruction squarely on the shoulders of the staff who support people with disabilities.

The articles in this issue of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* reassert several fundamental concepts:

- People with the most severe and complex disabilities can learn if we provide effective instruction. In essence, these people are ready to be employed now and need effective instruction and support.
- We have a well-researched array of instructional strategies at our disposal that are effective in teaching people complex work and work-related activities. These strategies are ones that have been demonstrated as effective through numerous research and demonstration projects and through the daily work of practitioners.
- The goal of our instruction must be clear: to assist workers with the most severe disabilities to be successful in all aspects of their work lives in regular places of business. The goal therefore is not simply skill acquisition, but a more basic overall improvement in the quality of individuals' lives.
- Professionals who provide service to individuals with disabilities must be excellent instructors who can effectively use an array of well-researched instructional strategies. Thus, direct service personnel must be highly skilled professionals who have mastered the tools of their trade.

- Instruction is as much an art as a science, and effective instructors must use both creativity and logic in addressing complex instructional challenges.
- Instructional strategies must focus on enhancing the connection of employees with disabilities to natural sources of support in their places of work. This implies that how, when, and to whom we provide instruction is expanding from a focus solely on workers with disabilities and now includes co-workers, supervisors, and others.
- Professionals who work in a training capacity have a professional obligation to ensure that direct service professionals know how to use instructional strategies effectively. This will require the use of creative approaches to presenting complex and often technical information in ways that will allow mastery by direct service professionals.

This issue of the Journal contains a number of excellent papers which address diverse facets of community-based instruction. These articles extend our collective knowledge and offer innovative approaches to teaching meaningful and valued work activities that allow success in places of community employment.

The article by Storey, Lengyel, and Pruszyński describes a study in which two approaches to teaching conversational training skills to four individuals within integrated work environments were compared. This study highlights the need for our instruction to focus not only on work activities but also on the related social skills that are so important in work environments. Storey and his colleagues compare two practical approaches to teaching conversational skills during break time interactions with non-disabled co-workers. The strategies that are compared require little investment of staff time and can result in increased abilities in one of the most important work-related skills in almost any place of business.

Pancsofar and Steere offer a set of recommendations for the merging of information gathered from lifestyle planning with situational assessment data. Organized as the C.A.P.A.B.L.E. process, this approach emphasizes the critical im-

portance of individual's choice and aspiration as a force behind the assessment process. Rather than being a technical process, assessment for employment success involves gathering and merging divergent pieces of information that assist the individual in finding a path to success in the work world.

Self-management skills are an essential ingredient to success in employment settings. Hughes and Scott describe a six-step process for teaching self-management skills that allow individuals with disabilities to experience success in the absence of employment specialists. Their model combines current approaches to self-instruction with instruction in multiple examples of activities so that worker abilities are extended to new situations that arise. This article provides a process that not only results in greater adaptability by workers with disabilities but that is presented in a straightforward manner that employment specialist and other professionals can use.

Berg, Flynn, and Wacker focus on a strategy to address potential future difficulties that may arise during the follow-along phase of employment when employment specialists instructional support is faded. Their approach involves assessing workers' reactions to potential or likely changes in work environments prior to when difficulties arise so that adaptive and generalized skills can be taught pro-actively. This approach relies on the ability of support professionals to hypothesize why workers may experience difficulties with changes such as new materials or co-workers and then to teach generalized skills that will decrease the likelihood that these changes will present significant problems to workers.

Butterworth, Whitney-Thomas, and Shaw extend the concept of community-based instruction to include strategies for training and consulting with co-workers to facilitate the development of natural supports in the work place. Their work from the Massachusetts Natural Supports Project documents the relationship between training strategies used by employment training specialists (ETS) and the supporting nature of a work place culture. This article highlights the expanding scope of instruction away from a simple instructor-learner relationship and toward a broader

ecological perspective on community-based instruction.

This issue of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* challenges us to renew our commitment to the belief that all individuals, including those with the most severe disabilities, who choose to work in integrated jobs can do so — if provided with the effective instruction. We know how to teach not only basic skills but complex activities such as conversation skills, self-management skills, and

generalized responses to new problems that arise on the job. The results of our instruction far exceed skill acquisition and instead represent employment success and overall lifestyle enhancement for people with severe disabilities who have been told that they were ‘too disabled to learn.’

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