

Heidi's Inclusion in Junior High: Transition and Educational Planning for a Student with Deaf-Blindness

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What are the markers of a good quality life? How can we contribute to the quality of a student's life through education? These are long-standing questions for parents and professionals alike. Regardless of differences in philosophy or approach, a common denominator among those interested in the public education of children is the desire for students' lives to be better as a result of having attended our schools; beyond that, there is less agreement about what constitutes quality education leading to personally and societally meaningful outcomes. In part, this can be attributed to the fact that what constitutes "quality of life" is individual, subjective, affected by context, and changes over time (Dennis, Williams, Giangreco & Cloninger, 1993).

In reference to students with disabilities, various paths to meaningful outcomes have been suggested; some of these have included functional life skills, traditional academics, community-based training, social skill development and friendships, peer supports, and educational inclusion with peers who do not have disabilities. Regardless of your viewpoint about these or other approaches, individualization or "goodness-of-fit" between how we plan and implement education is crucial to ways in which education will affect perceived quality of life (Schalock, 1990). Although each child shares some characteristics with

all other children, and shares other characteristics with some other children, each child also has characteristics that are uniquely his or her own (Speight, Myers, Cox & Highlen, 1991). This highlights the need for individualization as the linchpin that will link planning to meaningful outcomes.

COACH - Choosing Options and Accommodations for Children: A Guide to Planning Inclusive Education¹ (Giangreco, Cloninger, & Iverson, 1993) is an existing tool for planning inclusive education. It uses an individualized approach that explicitly links the selection of educational learning outcomes and supports to family-selected "Valued Life Outcomes." (See Table 1.)

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¹ The version of COACH used by this team was a prepublication version of the one referenced in this article. The version used was substantively the same with several editing differences.

