Community Based Instruction (CBI) is designed for students that need intensive instruction in functional and daily living skills. Community Based Instruction (CBI) is educational instruction in naturally occurring community environments providing students “real life experiences”. The goal is to provide a variety of hands on learning opportunities at all age levels to help students acquire the skills to live in the world today.

Community is defined as the school, home and city community environments in the location the student lives. Students with cognitive challenges have difficulty generalizing or transferring information. When instruction is conducted with the actual materials in the natural environment where a functional skill is expected to be performed or the activity would occur, students progress at a greater rate. CBI provides natural opportunities for Adult Living skills practice that is meaningful to students. Concepts and skills that are introduced in the classroom are applied and practiced in natural environments in the community using CBI. CBI experiences allow students to see, hear, smell and do things in real life settings as opposed to simulated or artificial settings that are very abstract. Doing things in the natural environment is concrete, reinforcing, and assists in providing educational relevancy for the student.

Community-based instruction facilitates chronological age-appropriate activities that can be addressed in home, school or city community environments. As the student ages more emphasis should be placed on CBI as the student prepares for leaving the school support systems to adult life in the community. The community often becomes the primary educational environment as students age. CBI provides the availability of age-appropriate instructional environments for students 18-21 years of age that state law requires. Teaching functional skills will often be a bridge for individuals with disabilities to their communities.

A key to CBI is to offer experiences across settings and time periods to promote generalization. Community-Based Instruction enhances community inclusion with students without disabilities, employers, family and other community members, ultimately enhancing an individual’s quality of life. Community-based instruction occurs routinely, on a regularly scheduled basis (i.e., weekly, twice weekly, daily, etc.) and must be specifically related to IEP objectives.

What About Academics?

Reading, writing, language, math and science subjects are incorporated into functional activities. Students learn skills such as; money handling, counting change, how to pay for goods and services, banking, budgeting, time concepts, time management, planning and scheduling. Reading and writing skills are taught to enable students to use functional materials such as cookbooks, directions, applications, maps, schedules, planners, environmental signs and work related information. Students learn to use adaptive aids such as checklists, cue cards, picture symbols, and/or augmentative speech devices to assist them in successfully accessing community activities and resources. CBI should not replace classes but complement them to provide a wide array of experiences.
Many Skill Areas May Be Addressed Using CBI

Language Arts
Social Studies
Math
Health
Science

Benefits of Community-Based Instruction

- Promotes inclusion or integration in real environments with peers and community members
- Provides a variety of experiences
- Responding to natural consequences and criteria
- Enhances life experience
- Provides access to age-appropriate environments and materials
- Provides LRE
- Increases expectations
- Identifies individual strengths, preferences and interests
- Assists in improved self determination skills
- Provides opportunities for social and interpersonal communication

10 Step Plan For Developing A CBI Process

1. Communicate with Administration & Parents
2. Obtain Parental Permission
3. Plan-Sight visit and Identify IEP objectives/ concepts to address during CBI
4. Prepare- Class introduction and Stepping Out Cues
   (see Stepping Out A Community-based Instruction Curriculum by Ilene M. Schwartz)
5. Inform - & Leave CBI Notice Form
6. Communicate/Get Input from Students and Staff In Relationship to IEP and Purpose
7. Implement
8. Collect Data – Notebooks Students Self-Evaluate
9. Problem-Solve/Discuss
10. Communicate Again-Staff and Students

*Return to Step 1*
Guidelines for CBI (Kregel, 1997)

1. Instruction should focus on activities not isolated skills. For example, shopping may include choosing a store, trying clothes on, selecting an article of clothing, and finally paying for the item.

2. Instruction should take place at the time of day at which the task is usually performed. Prepare food at mealtime instead of after lunch.

3. When possible, the student should spend the majority of time with his or her same-aged peers.

4. The length of time between instructional sessions will vary depending upon student needs and the task to be learned. For example, some students may be able to acquire community skills when instruction occurs once a week, others may benefit from several sessions per week. Learning to ride a bus could occur several times a week, banking may occur once a week.

Emergency Information

Each Supervising Staff Should Carry A Binder Or Folder Containing The Following

- Identification and emergency information on each student who is receiving instruction in the community. Information should include:
  1. The student’s name, addresses, and phone number
  2. The parent’s name and phone number
  3. The name of the school and the phone number.
  4. The name of the school administrator.
  5. Medical information.
  6. The student’s mode of communication.
  7. A picture of the student, if one is available.
- First-aid supplies (gloves and at least $.35 for emergency calls).
- Incident Form
- Transportation Information (bus schedule)

Each Student Should Carry The Following

- Personal identification, any necessary emergency information (i.e., medical considerations) and relevant phone numbers. Students unable to independently carry identification and emergency information should have emergency information and identification in wallet in backpack.
- Each student should carry at least $.35 for an emergency phone call.

Data

Teacher or Teaching Assistant must keep on-going written data related to the implementation of community IEP objectives. Student progress must be recorded each time a student receives CBI.