THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON
Sonoran Center for
Excellence in Disabilities

Community-Based Instruction (CBI): Supporting Transition Skills in Middle School Beyond Classroom Walls

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Story of Amphi and the Need for CBI

- We noticed our students with I/DD were missing meaningful real-world connections between classroom learning and everyday life.
- What began as a focused effort at one middle school was quickly recognized as a need across our district, and developed into a COP.
- In collaboration with the Sonoran Center Transition program manager, Loretta, we developed a comprehensive year-long COP to guide consistent, intentional community experiences and transition planning for our students.

Why Middle School Transition

- In AZ: Transition services for students must be in the IEP when the student ends 9th grade or age 16, whichever is first, or earlier, as determined necessary by the student's IEP team.
  - This means transition activities need to start in middle school.
- Successful transition is more complicated than just having transition in an IEP at the age of 16.
- Instruction in transition skills such as career awareness and exploration at an early age, gives students time to formulate realistic goals

Resource-NTACT Middle School Transition Planning Practices

Why Middle School Transition (cont.)

- In middle school youth decide what classes they want to take in HS (CTE, honors, etc.)-transition plan can help guide this.
- Study Cimera et al. (2014) effects of providing transition services to students with I/DD by age 14 compared to by age 16.
  - By age 14 were more likely to be employed than youth receiving services by age 16 (i.e., 58.8% compared to 45.6%)

Resource-Cimera, R. E., Burgess, S., & Bedesem, P. L. (2014). Does providing transition services by age 14 produce better vocational outcomes for students with intellectual disability? Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 39(1), 47-54.

What are Living Skills?

Essential abilities needed for daily independent functioning.

What is CBI?

Hands on strategy where students learn and practice functional, academic, and social skills in real-world community settings, rather than solely in the classroom.

Why Community-Based Instruction?

- Supports IEP goals and functional skill development
- Builds independence, safety awareness, and social skills
- Connects classroom learning to real-world application
- Best practice for life skills and transition activities

Understanding CBI

Purpose
Bridges classroom learning with real world application.

Benefits
Enhances functional skills, promotes independence, and increase social interactions. Transfer of skills to new environments.

Settings
Grocery stores, restaurants, public transportation, banks, libraries, employers

Focus

Practical application of academic skills in everyday situations.

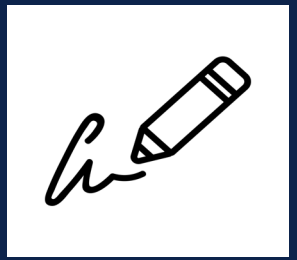
Community-Based Learning in Action

Step 1

What specific skills do students need to be successful, independent, and contributing members of their community?

1. **Say it out loud**

2. **Write it Down**

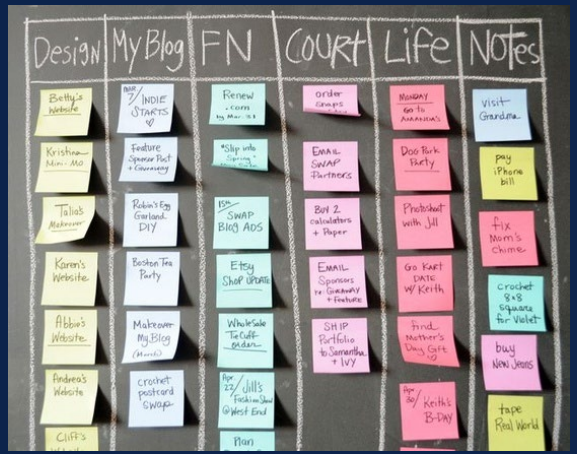


3. **Place them in the middle of the table.**

Step 2

Group

- Group similar words together- At least four groups
- Give each group a label- One to three words



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Step 3

Subsume

Definition- Include or absorb into something else

What to do

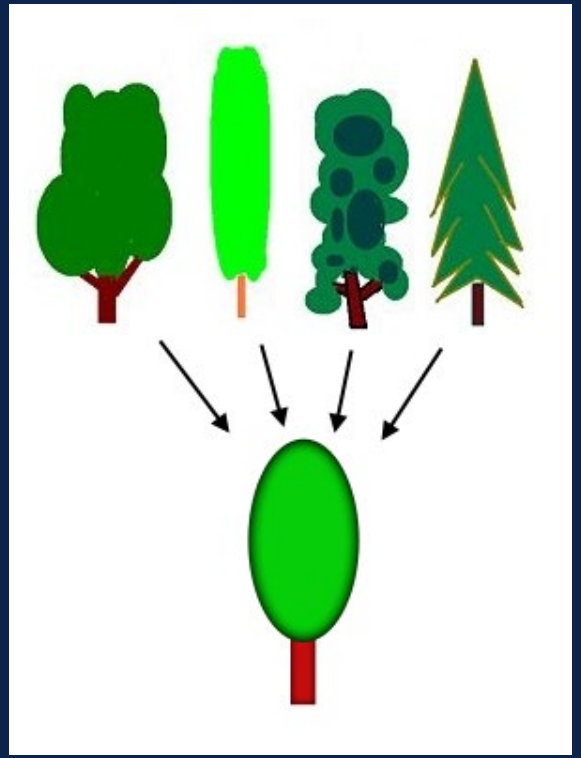
Identify groups that could fit under the heading of another group

03:00

Step 4

Generalize

Make broad but relevant statement about the nature of the items on the cards based on the insights gathered in Steps 1-4



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Developmental Appropriateness for Middle Schoolers

Key Developmental Stage (Ages 11-14)

- Increased independence seeking
- Growing social awareness
- Abstract thinking development
- Physical/emotional changes

Skills Must Align With-

- Cognitive abilities
- Physical capabilities
- Social-emotional maturity
- Individual student needs

IEP Alignment and Life Outcomes

IEP

- Goals must be measurable
- Focus on postsecondary outcomes

Key Life Outcomes

- Independent living
- Community participation
- Employment readiness
- Education and lifelong learning
- Social Integration

Functional vs. Academic Balance

Functional

- Daily living skills
- Life management
- Social interactions
- Community skills
- Communication skills

Academic Integration

- Math in money management or cooking
- Reading in following instructions, schedules, labels
- Writing in completing forms, making list

Finding the right balance for each student

Brainstorm: Barriers to Implementing Community-Based Instruction (CBI) Step 1

Think about what makes it challenging to plan or implement effective CBI experiences.

- **Student-related barriers:** behavior, safety concerns, readiness, accessibility
- **Logistical barriers:** transportation, scheduling, staffing, permissions
- **Resource barriers:** funding, materials, community partnerships
- **Instructional barriers:** aligning with IEP goals, curriculum connections, time for planning

  Collaboration barriers: coordination with therapists, families, or community sites

In your groups, discuss and list each barrier on a Post-It

Brainstorm: Barriers to Implementing Community-Based Instruction (CBI) Step 2

Think about what makes it challenging to plan or implement effective CBI experiences.

Activity:

👉 Add your Post-Its to the appropriate chart paper-

- Two categories- Barriers that are **within your control** and those that are **system-level challenges.**

  Follow-Up Discussion at your table:

  - Which barriers come up most often?
  - What creative solutions have you tried or seen work?

Integrating Academics into the CBI Experience

Mathematics Integration

Money Management

- Counting currency
- Making change
- Budgeting for purchases

Time Management

- Reading analog/digital clocks
- Following schedule
- Estimating duration

Measurement

- Reading product quantities
- Comparing prices
- Understanding unit pricing

Data Collection

- Tracking Expenses
- Creating/following a shopping list
- Calculating tip

ELA Integration

Reading Skills

- Store signs and labels
- Menu interpretations
- Transportation schedules
- Safety and warning signs

Writing Applications

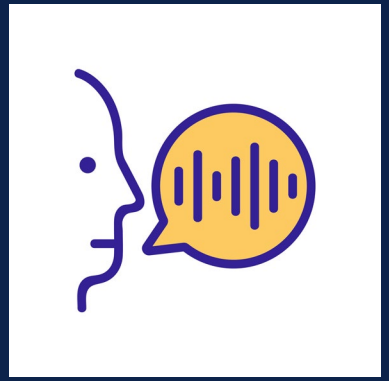
- Shopping list
- Basic forms
- Notes and reminders
- Order forms

Communication Skills

- Asking for assistance/self-advocacy
- Following verbal directions
- Reading social cues
- Professional interactions

Related Services Integration- Speech

- ➔ Support communication in community settings:
  - ◆ Ordering at restaurants
  - ◆ Asking for assistance in stores
  - ◆ Reading community signs and labels
  - ◆ Social interactions with community members



- ➔ Implements AAC devices in real situations
- ➔ Develops functional vocabulary relevant to community settings
- ➔ Practices pragmatic language skills in authentic environments

Related Services Integration-Physical Therapy

- ➔ Enhances functional life skills:
  - ◆ Safe navigation of different terrains
  - ◆ Public transportation use
  - ◆ Managing doors and obstacles
  - ◆ Community safety awareness
- ➔ Practice transfer skills in real situations
- ➔ Develops stamina for community activities
- ➔ Adapts mobility devices for various settings

Related Services Integration-Occupational Therapy

- ➔ Enhances functional life skills:
  - ◆ Managing money (wallets, coins)
  - ◆ Shopping skills
  - ◆ Personal care in public spaces
  - ◆ Using community equipment/facilities

- ➔ Develop fine motor skills through real task
- ➔ Implement sensory strategies in community settings
- ➔ Teaching organizational skills for community activities
- ➔ Adapts tools and environments for success

Related Services Integration-Collaborative Strategies

- ➔ Team planning and coordination-invite them to join CBI, coordinate schedules
- ➔ Joint goal-setting aligned with IEP objectives
- ➔ Shared documentation of progress
- ➔ Regular communication between service providers
- ➔ Cross-training of strategies among team members
- ➔ Family involvement and training
- ➔ Ongoing assessment and adjustment of interventions

Other Pieces of CBI to consider

1. Family Communication Development
2. Permission Forms and Documentation
3. Family Input/ Skill Inventory
4. District Approval Process
5. Work Time and Support

Family Communication

Why it Matters

- Builds trust and transparency
- Clarifies purpose and expectations
- Reduces confusion and concern
- Ensures compliance

What to Include

- What CBI is and why students participate
- Skills students will practice
- Example locations, general
- Safety assurances
- Contact information

Permission Forms

Permission forms should include:

- ➔ Statement of CBI participation
- ➔ General locations
- ➔ Transportation method
- ➔ School year coverage
- ➔ Opt in/Opt Out
- ➔ Parent/guardian signature

Caregiver Responsibility:

- ➔ Track returned forms
- ➔ Follow up with families as needed

No permission = No participation

Family Input and Inventory

Family input helps:

- ➔ Identify meaningful community skills
- ➔ Respect cultural and family values
- ➔ Support generalization at home
- ➔ Strengthen IEP and transition planning

What to ask:

- ➔ Skills families what their child to practice
- ➔ Skills they have mastered and need support with
- ➔ Community locations they have visited
- ➔ Safety and behavior concerns
- ➔ Independence goals for the year

Getting Approval- Overview

CBI outings are still instructional field trips and require…

- ➔ Administrative approval
- ➔ Proper documentation
- ➔ Transportation approval
- ➔ Adherence to organizations timelines and requirements

Approval- Typical Steps

- ➔ Identify community location
- ➔ Complete site approval forms
- ➔ Submit for administrator approval
- ➔ Coordinate transportation
- ➔ Confirm staff coverage and ratios
  - ◆ Always follow your site specific process

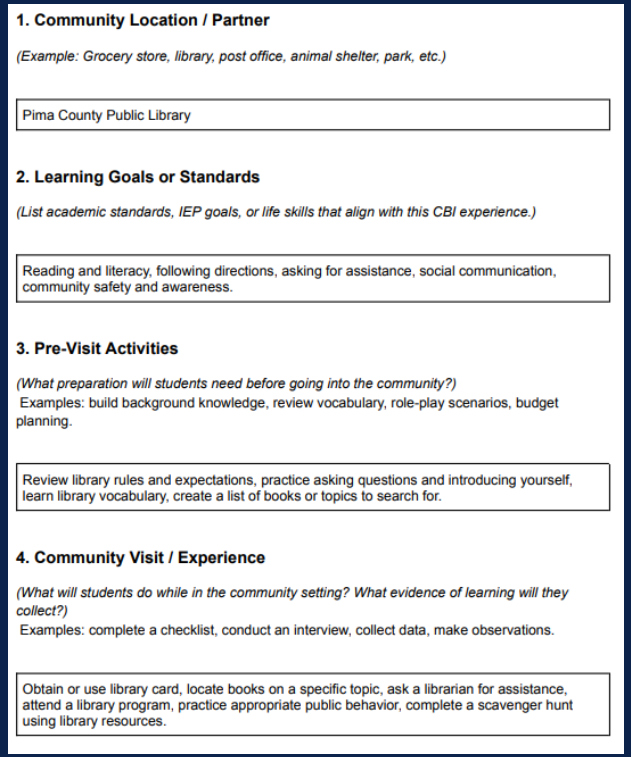
Design Your CBI Experience

Choose one community setting and complete the CBI Planning Template including:

- Community Location
- Academic or IEP goal
- Pre-Visit Activity
- During Visit Activity- include assessment
- Post-Visit Activity
- Family/Communication Idea

Template Link

Sample CBI Experiences from Middle School teachers



1. Community Location / Partner

(Example: Grocery store, library, post office, animal shelter, park, etc.)

Pima County Public Library

2. Learning Goals or Standards

(List academic standards, IEP goals, or life skills that align with this CBI experience.)

Reading and literacy, following directions, asking for assistance, social communication, community safety and awareness.

3. Pre-Visit Activities

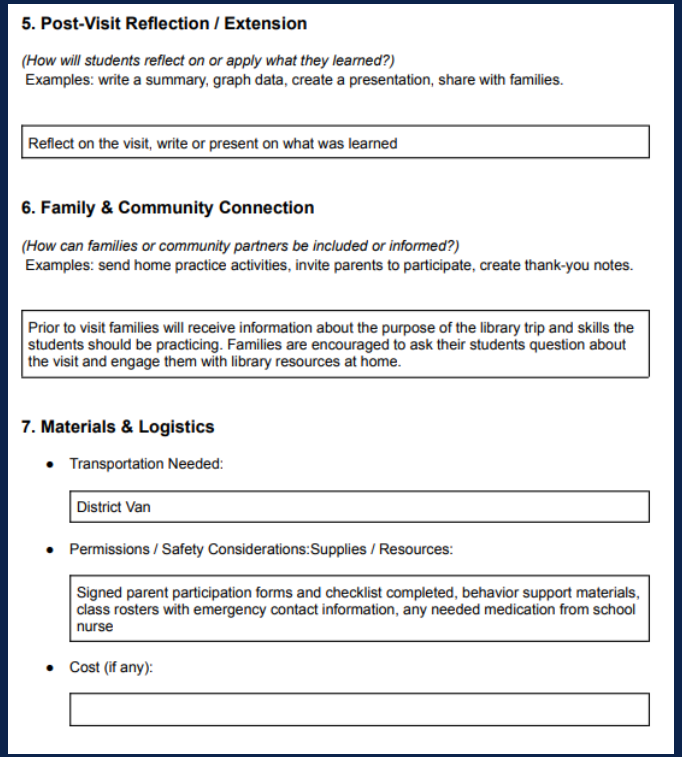
(What preparation will students need before going into the community?)
Examples: build background knowledge, review vocabulary, role-play scenarios, budget planning.

Review library rules and expectations, practice asking questions and introducing yourself, learn library vocabulary, create a list of books or topics to search for.

4. Community Visit / Experience

(What will students do while in the community setting? What evidence of learning will they collect?)
Examples: complete a checklist, conduct an interview, collect data, make observations.

Obtain or use library card, locate books on a specific topic, ask a librarian for assistance, attend a library program, practice appropriate public behavior, complete a scavenger hunt using library resources.



5. Post-Visit Reflection / Extension

(How will students reflect on or apply what they learned?)
Examples: write a summary, graph data, create a presentation, share with families.

Reflect on the visit, write or present on what was learned

6. Family & Community Connection

(How can families or community partners be included or informed?)
Examples: send home practice activities, invite parents to participate, create thank-you notes.

Prior to visit families will receive information about the purpose of the library trip and skills the students should be practicing. Families are encouraged to ask their students question about the visit and engage them with library resources at home.

7. Materials & Logistics

- Transportation Needed:

  District Van

- Permissions / Safety Considerations:Supplies / Resources:

  Signed parent participation forms and checklist completed, behavior support materials, class rosters with emergency contact information, any needed medication from school nurse

- Cost (if any):