

FUNCTIONAL MATHEMATICS

Mathematics may be considered the most functionally relevant academic subject. Mathematics, for all persons in a society who are not university bound, must have as its essential thrust and ultimate goal the application of mathematical concepts and skills to daily life.

The application of mathematical understandings is especially pertinent when one reviews the critical importance of relevant knowledge and skills as they apply to the management of money, measurement and time. These three crucial personal-environmental interactions strongly suggest that mathematical competency should be assigned high priority in a functional curriculum. Moreover, because of the nature of these three areas of human endeavor, the application of requisite skills is highly motivating to students, particularly when the students are provided with instruction in the handling of money and monetary transactions.

An emphasis on money, measurement and time in a functional curriculum also provides teachers, other trainers, and family members with extraordinary opportunities to design and implement instructional plans that rely heavily on “hands-on” materials and experiences. The use of actual currency and coins in teaching/learning experiences brings not only relevance but also a degree of “magic” to these experiences. The use of rulers, yardsticks, measuring cups and spoons, and other instruments of measurement helps students meet their life needs in completing household tasks such as cooking, decorating, and maintaining a home; in leisure-time pursuits, especially in arts and crafts projects; and in numerous vocational applications.

Mathematics, as an applied symbol system, within the context of a life skills curriculum, must receive major attention. As the long-range goal of a functional curriculum is the ultimate successful functioning of the individual as an adult member of society, the role of mathematics is crucial to that ultimate success.

This information is an excerpt taken from A Functional Curriculum for Teaching Students with Disabilities (Volume 3, Second Edition) by Peter J. Valletutti, Michael Bender, and Bernita Sims-Tucker, Pro-Ed publisher.