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Lesson This lesson has been created in collaboration with National Numeracy, the independent charity that works to improve how people understand and work with numbers in everyday life, sparking better opportunities and brighter futures. Maths is all around us, when we are at school, at home or at work. Having confidence in facing maths in our everyday lives is a key skill that can be developed and nurtured with practice. This lesson features in the financial education scheme of learning for 11-14 year olds. A ready-made sequence of curriculum linked resources to help you build progression in your learners' knowledge over time. Visit the Scheme of learning homepage to support with your planning. This lesson will show students that everybody uses maths every day, whether they think about it or not. It aims to demonstrate that regardless of their chosen career path, the interests they have in their spare time or the life situations they face, having a good understanding of maths will help them progress in different life areas. Resources Maths in everyday life: Lesson plan – for use with a group of students in the classroom. Maths in everyday life: Student worksheet – to support students work through activities. Maths in everyday life: thermometer poster – can be displayed on a whiteboard or printed out. Key learning outcomes By the end of these lessons, students will be able to: Understand how everybody uses maths in everyday life. Relate how having a good understanding of maths can help future success. Know how to talk openly about their feelings towards maths Being numerate can be challenging at any time. If you as an educator would benefit from strengthening your number skills why not try National Numeracy's Number Change? The web-based learning tool is designed to help adults improve their maths skills in manageable steps, whilst building confidence along the way. Log in or register to watch the film image not available forColor: To view this video download Flash Player This article is designed to be utilized with the utmost professional integrity and ethical consideration. It is imperative to acknowledge that directly copying and pasting example goals into student's IEPs from an external source, including ours, undermines the individualized nature of IEP planning and does not serve the best interests of students. This resource aims to inspire the development of IEP goals that address the needs of students, not a substitute for the detailed, student-centered IEP goal setting process. Educators and IEP teams are urged to use this as a tool for ideation, basing final goals on student assessments and collaborative IEP team insights. Did you know that on average, American students' math knowledge is about half a school year behind where it should be, based on recent reports? While many students receive extra support for math, whether that's in the form of supplemental instruction like AIS or via their individualized education plans (IEPs), the reality is that, for many students, additional personalized support is necessary. They need functional math IEP goals that are uniquely targeted to their needs, and specific to their goals in the real world. Functional math focuses on the practical, real-world applications of meaningful math skills. These are skills that are required not just to be successful in later, more advanced math courses, but also to be successful in everyday life. Writing clear, practical functional math IEP goals is a highly effective way to support your students' daily success and independence. Let's break down what they are, how to write them, and how to measure their progress. Click here to jump down the the IEP goals. What is Functional Math? Functional math refers to the development of math skills that directly impact a student's ability to complete day-to-day tasks. Unlike abstract or theoretical math concepts that you might encounter in advanced classes, these are the math skills students use to manage money, follow recipes, read a schedule, or measure ingredients for a project. Just like fine motor skills help students perform everyday tasks, functional math helps students build important skills for independence. Building competency in functional math enables students to independently handle everyday personal and professional tasks. It's also worth noting that functional math supports the development of broader cognitive skills. These include problem-solving, logical reasoning, and critical thinking, which are essential for decision-making across all areas of life—academic or otherwise, and in both mathematics and other core subjects. What Are Examples of Functional Math? Functional math is somewhat of a loose term, since it can refer to and include a wide variety of skills. While your students might be at very different learning stages, and so their functional math IEP goals will also vary significantly, they can most easily be broken down into these basic categories: Basic Numbers and Operations The ability to recognize and manipulate numbers is fundamental, so this category includes number sense (understanding the value of numbers), counting both forward and backward, and recognizing numerals. Early learners might work on activities such as understanding one-to-one correspondence, which teaches them how to connect a numeral with a quantity. For example, if a student is learning the number three, they should be able to match it with three apples or three blocks. We often assume that these are skills to focus on only in the elementary years, but the reality is that even for older students, mastering these areas supports their confidence in handling more complex, practical math tasks. So don't ignore your student's strengths or deficits in this area as you're writing even functional math IEP goals for high school students. Understanding Size and Measurements Your students also need to learn how to measure and compare. These skills help students complete tasks like pouring the right amount of liquid into a glass or measuring fabric for a school project. Visualizing and understanding size, quantity, and measurement not only ties into academic requirements but also helps students manage all kinds of tasks, ranging from cooking to rearranging their desks. Geometry and Spatial Awareness Spatial awareness helps students understand how shapes and sizes connect. This can include learning to identify shapes, visualizing spatial relationships, and comprehending how objects fit together. Being able to visualize "three" of something helps students understand quantities and patterns in a tangible way. Patterns, Sequences, and Estimation Functional math also includes identifying and working with patterns, recognizing sequences, and making logical estimates. These abilities are essential for tasks like following step-by-step instructions or predicting outcomes in everyday situations. Think about solving a puzzle or arranging objects in a pattern—these activities build a foundation for more advanced functional tasks like planning and prioritizing actions. Comparison and Sorting Daily life often requires students to compare and sort objects. Whether it's organizing school supplies, cleaning their desks, or grouping similar items, the ability to distinguish between differences and similarities is an important functional skill. For instance, students who are focusing on this type of functional math IEP goal might work on exercises that involve sorting objects by size, color, or shape to develop these abilities. Problem-Solving and Logical Thinking Problem-solving builds on all the other functional
math areas. This skill helps students address real-life challenges, such as figuring out how to divide a pizza equally among friends or determine which bus route will get them to school on time. Through practice, your students can develop confidence in tackling situations that require more analytical thinking. Why is Functional Math Important? When students have the ability to grasp functional math skills, they open the door to greater independence. If you've ever heard your students grumble, "When will I ever use this in real life?" the answer should be quite simple. Unlike trigonometry, which admittedly can be difficult (though certainly not impossible!) to apply to real-life situations, the skills your students acquire through functional math are broad-reaching. They make everyday activities possible. Whether it's shopping for groceries, budgeting for a school project, or even understanding time so they can catch the bus, your students need to have at least an elementary grasp of these core functional math skills. These skills also lead to increased confidence and academic success. Students who prefer practical math applications often experience increased confidence and success in real-world situations. For example, learning to manage money not only teaches basic arithmetic but also encourages a sense of responsibility and empowerment. There's a strong link between functional math and employment readiness. Many jobs—whether in retail, hospitality, or other industries—require basic math skills. From making accurate change to preparing orders, functional math helps prepare students for whatever comes next after high school. 52 Functional Math IEP Goals Basic Numbers and Operations By the end of the IEP period, when given a set of written numbers, [Student Name] will identify numbers 1-100 with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given a single-digit addition problem, [Student Name] will solve it using physical manipulatives with 80% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when presented with basic subtraction problems up to 20, [Student Name] will solve them with 85% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given a monetary amount up to \$10, [Student Name] will count out the correct coins with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in community-based instruction as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when provided multiplication problems up to 12x12, [Student Name] will solve them with 80% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given digit cards, [Student Name] will order numbers from smallest to largest with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when presented with division problems up to 144 ÷ 12, [Student Name] will solve them with 75% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given a number line, [Student Name] will plot numbers correctly with 85% accuracy in 4 out of 5 attempts in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when asked to skip-count, [Student Name] will count by 2s, 5s, and 10s up to 100 with 80% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. Working on thinking outside of the box? Try these cognitive flexibility IEP goals. Understanding Size and Measurements By the end of the IEP period, when given real-life items, [Student Name] will estimate and measure their length in inches and centimeters with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom or community settings as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when presented with various containers, [Student Name] will identify the appropriate unit of measurement (ounces, cups, liters) with 85% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom settings as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when asked to compare two objects, [Student Name] will use comparative language such as longer, shorter, or heavier with 90% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom discussions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given a list of daily tasks, [Student Name] will estimate the time required in minutes with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 attempts in life-skills sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when provided with various objects, [Student Name] will classify and order them by weight from lightest to heaviest with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities in classroom settings as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given a recipe, [Student Name] will measure ingredients accurately using measuring cups or spoons 90% of the time in 3 out of 5 trials in kitchen-based instruction as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when provided with a clock, [Student Name] will identify the correct time to the nearest five minutes with 85% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom or community settings as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when shown a thermometer, [Student Name] will read and record the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit with 85% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom settings as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when identifying distances on a map, [Student Name] will approximate distances in miles using the given scale with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 attempts in social-studies sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given a set of objects, [Student Name] will sequence them by size from smallest to largest in 4 out of 5 attempts with 90% accuracy in classroom settings as measured by teacher data collection. If you are writing goals for students with ADHD, check out these IEP goal examples. Geometry and Spatial Awareness By the end of the IEP period, when given two-dimensional shapes, [Student Name] will identify circles, squares, triangles, and rectangles with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when presented with three-dimensional objects, [Student Name] will identify spheres, cubes, cones, and cylinders with 85% accuracy in 3 out of 5 attempts in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when provided with a simple map, [Student Name] will use directional terms (left, right, above, below) with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in geography sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given models, [Student Name] will describe basic attributes of shapes with 85% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given pictures of shapes, [Student Name] will sort them as symmetrical or asymmetrical with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in art/math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when presented with incomplete shapes, [Student Name] will draw symmetrical reflections with 80% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when provided with pattern blocks, [Student Name] will create a basic geometric pattern with 90% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given a graph, [Student Name] will independently generate two potential solutions with appropriate reasoning in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom settings as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when asked to [Student Name] will classify angles as acute, obtuse, or right with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when using a protractor, [Student Name] will measure angles in degrees with 85% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. Need self-advocacy support? See these asking for help IEP goals. Patterns, Sequences, and Estimation By the end of the IEP period, when provided with a number sequence, [Student Name] will identify and extend the pattern with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when presented with objects in a repeating pattern, [Student Name] will replicate or continue the pattern with 85% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when provided with an incomplete sequence, [Student Name] will complete the sequence with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when shown grouped items, [Student Name] will estimate the total quantity within 2 units of accuracy in 3 out of 5 opportunities in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given mathematical equations, [Student Name] will identify whether each equation follows a pattern with 80% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given a real-world scenario such as estimating total cost at a
store, [Student Name] will make a reasonable estimation with 85% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities in community-based instruction as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when asked to identify patterns in weather data, [Student Name] will make predictions based on observed patterns with 85% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom science sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given a repeating pattern, [Student Name] will identify and extend the pattern with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when observing repeating behaviors in data sets, [Student Name] will articulate the pattern with 80% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when sorting beads or blocks into patterns, [Student Name] will identify and correct misaligned pieces with 85% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in occupational-therapy sessions as measured by teacher or therapist data collection. Need help with initiation or completion? See task initiation and work completion goals. Comparison Goals By the end of the IEP period, when given two objects with differing features, [Student Name] will verbally describe at least two differences with 85% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom conversations as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when presented with pictorial data, [Student Name] will compare quantities and state which is greater, lesser, or equal with 90% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when observing animal or plant traits, [Student Name] will articulate similarities and differences between at least two species with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom science sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when given two objects of different sizes, [Student Name] will identify which is larger or smaller with 85% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom settings as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when provided two sets of items, [Student Name] will determine which set has more, less, or an equal number with 90% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when analyzing two numerical datasets, [Student Name] will identify which set contains higher or lower values with 90% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when working with puzzles of increasing difficulty, [Student Name] will employ trial-and-error strategies and successfully complete the task with 85% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in classroom or therapy sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when presented with word problems involving basic addition or subtraction, [Student Name] will identify relevant information, select the correct operation, and solve with 90% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when faced with real-life money scenarios, [Student Name] will calculate total cost and determine correct change with 80% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials in community-based instruction as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when presented with a task requiring logical sequencing, [Student Name] will arrange steps in the correct order with 85% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials in vocational training as measured by teacher data collection. By the end of the IEP period, when solving multi-step problems, [Student Name] will follow all steps systematically and reach the correct solution with 75% accuracy in 4 out of 5 attempts in classroom math sessions as measured by teacher data collection. Here are a few more problem-solving IEP goals to help inspire you. How Do You Write an IEP Goal for Functional Math? When you're writing functional math IEP goals, clarity and specificity are two of the most important traits to keep in mind. Together, they'll help you bridge the gap between how functional math is learned and how it is then applied in the real world. The simplest way to write a functional math IEP goal is to start with this basic framework: When given [instruction or task], the student will [demonstrate skill or behavior] with ____% accuracy in ____ out of ____ trials within [time period]. By breaking this down into actionable parts, each with a distinct role, you'll be able to measure progress and align your goals to each student's functional need. Remember, your goal should be measurable, so you'll need to think about the skills that matter most in real life for that particular student across the board. Budgeting, telling time, calculating tips, and reading graphs are just a few of the skills you may want to focus on, but there may be something else your student needs even more. Before setting a goal, ask yourself, "How will this help the student succeed beyond the classroom?" For example, if you have a student for whom you want to set goals related to grocery budgets, you might have the following goal: 8 Evidence-Based Tips for Teaching Functional Math Whether it's managing money, reading a clock, or measuring time, functional math prepares students with the skills they'll use each and every day, both inside of and outside of the classroom. And while we've highlighted the importance of individualization in our functional math IEP goals examples and tips above, the reality is that there are a few concrete principles that can be applied across the board to help you make teaching those functional math skills, whatever they may be, a bit simpler. Here's our best advice: 1. Start By Identifying the Skills That Need to Be Learned Before you can start teaching or setting goals, you need to pinpoint the key skills your students need for daily living. This could range from identifying numbers to reading a calendar, depending on the student's age and needs. A great way to make this step more structured is by using explicit, systematic instruction—a teaching method proven to be effective for math learners. Recent research highlights the importance of breaking down concepts into manageable steps while continuously building on prior knowledge, a process that reduces overwhelm and makes it easier for you, the teacher, to see where additional instruction or scaffolding is needed. For example, if you're teaching how to add double-digit numbers, start with single digits and progress systematically, making sure your students have mastered the content before moving forward. 2. Carefully Plan and Sequence Your Instruction Once you've identified the core skills that need to be targeted, your next step is to create a plan that sequences those lessons in a logical order (i.e. the scaffolding we mentioned above). Start with foundational concepts, then work your way up to more complex ones, repeating segments as needed. For instance, if your IEP goal involves money management, begin with recognizing coin values before moving to addition and subtraction with money. Providing plenty of practice opportunities—both guided and independent—will help you to reinforce this learning. 3. Connect the Lessons to Prior Learning Math is an interconnected subject, not a set of isolated skills. Because of this, you shouldn't teach those skills in isolation, or they'll be too abstract for your students to grasp. Tying new lessons to what students already know strengthens understanding and retention. For example, when introducing time measurement, relate it to their familiarity with numbers and counting. Using strategies like reviewing vocabulary (e.g., "quarter past" or "half past") or asking "What do you already know about this?" helps activate prior knowledge, setting the stage for learning. It's also helpful to use real-life scenarios that connect to students' experiences, like planning a daily schedule or baking (a great way to introduce measurements!). 4. Use Visual Representatives and Manipulatives Visual aids and other hands-on tools can also be powerful partners when it comes to teaching functional math. You can use tools like counters, fraction bars, or (since it's 2025, after all!) even apps. These help make abstract concepts even more tangible for your students. Some of our favorite apps include those from Math Learning Center and Dixid Virtual Manipulatives, both of which offer highly engaging resources to help students explore fractions, build their number sense, and more. 5. Teach Metacognitive Strategies Metacognition is a process that we often think applies only to writing critical essays or deep, immersive philosophy lectures, but the reality is that this is something that can help your students immensely when it comes to meeting their functional math IEP goals. Metacognition is simply thinking about your own thinking. It gives students a major edge when they're solving math problems. Teach them strategies like the UPS-Check process, which encourages them to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own unique problem-solving process. You use it this way: You set a student up to calculate a grocery bill. Using UPS-Check, they'll first Understand what the problem asks. Plan their approach (maybe listing items and costs). Solve each step, and then Check if their solution makes sense. By teaching your students how to think about their own thinking in this way, it will improve their math skills while also boosting their confidence in how they address and tackle real-life challenges. 6. Provide Instruction on the Language of Mathematics Math isn't just about numbers—it's also about understanding the language that comes with it. Words like
"greater than," "equal," or "subtract" can be stumbling blocks for students if they aren't explicitly taught. A best practice here is to weave vocabulary instruction into your lessons. Use visuals, diagrams, and repetitive practice to reinforce terms. For instance, when explaining fractions, pair the word "numerator" with a labeled diagram. The most recent research recommends aligning your language instruction to math tasks, which makes math more accessible for students who might otherwise feel intimidated by unfamiliar terms. Whatever you do, don't ever assume your students know the language. Plan to teach even the simplest of the language associated with the larger task at hand, and you can always adjust the curriculum later on if such instruction proves to be unnecessary. 7. Introduce Timed Activities to Build Fluency Fluency is a foundational part of functional math—it's how students solve everyday problems with speed and accuracy. Introducing short, timed activities can help students practice and enhance their fluency without added pressure. For example, have students practice calculating change or solving clock-related problems within a set time. These activities can easily become part of your classroom routines while keeping things interactive and fun. And while we think of games like Popcorn or other activities (with which you may have some of a love-hate relationship based on your own years spent in math class!), the reality is that timed activities don't have to be about competition. They can be solely individual endeavors. The focus here is on building working memory so students can approach real-world math scenarios with ease. 8. Set Up Your Classroom to Support the Adoption of Mathematical Fluency Your teaching environment plays an important role in reinforcing functional math goals. Arrange your classroom so students are surrounded by visual references to math in their everyday lives. How you do this will likely vary depending on the age level, and number of students you teach, but some general examples include placing a working clock where it's easily visible, creating stations with manipulatives, or using calendars for interactive time-teaching activities. Beyond physical setup, do your best to build a space where teamwork and active learning thrive. Group problems or workstations centered around functional tasks like budgeting, scheduling, or measuring guarantee that your students see the relevance of math outside the classroom. Data Tracking Methods for Functional Math Just as important as writing exceptional functional math IEP goals (and then finding ways to teach your students well so they can actually meet those goals) is coming up with reliable data tracking methods so you know whether progress is being made (and how much). To do this, you'll need a reliable system for tracking your students' progress. As we've mentioned earlier, functional math skills often span areas like time management, budgeting, or measuring quantities, so your tracking methods should cater to these specific goals. The best thing you can do is to take frequent observations. Keep a log of how your students perform during class activities. For example, when you're teaching skills like counting money, jot down the occasions in which a student successfully identifies the right currency or accurately gives the correct change in a practice scenario. Using real-world situations, such as a class "store," can also help you gather meaningful data, but in a more natural setting. Another method to consider is task analysis, a teaching strategy we mentioned earlier. For instance, if your student's goal is to read an analog clock, separate lessons into recognizing the hour hand, understanding the minute hand, and combining the two skills to tell the time. Track their mastery of each step to pinpoint where they need the most support. A simple checklist can simplify this process, making it easier for you to keep tabs on individual growth. Digital tools, like apps or spreadsheets, can also be especially handy if you want more detailed analytics, since they allow you to record data regularly, spot trends over time, and ensure consistency in your tracking. Remember, data collection isn't just about ticking boxes, but about gathering actionable insights to refine your teaching strategies, so be as specific and detailed as you can. Measuring Progress for Functional Math Once you've set up effective data tracking, the next step is to measure progress in a way that truly reflects your students' improvements. The most important thing here is to balance measurable results with realistic expectations, a line that can admittedly be somewhat tricky to toe. Your best bet is to rely on the frequent, informal assessments we mentioned above. Create opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills in different contexts. For instance, practice budgeting lessons by introducing mock decision-making scenarios, like planning a grocery trip with a set amount of money. Then, gradually increase the difficulty as they gain confidence. Don't forget that, while students may show improvement over time, their functional math skills need to stick. That's where periodic evaluations come into play. Revisiting previously mastered concepts ensures the skills are retained. If retention becomes an issue, it might point to the need for extra practice or perhaps a tweak in instruction methods. Consider involving your students in the goal-measuring progress. The best way to find out whether your students are grasping the concepts you're teaching is to simply ask them. This also gives them a sense of ownership over the process. Celebrate their victories, however small, and encourage them to reflect on areas for improvement. Final Thoughts Teaching functional math skills to your students can admittedly be a challenge, but hopefully, after you've read this article, writing IEP goals to plan and measure them doesn't have to be. The best advice we can give is to always keep the focus on practicality. Think about the tasks your students will encounter in everyday life, then tailor their functional math IEP goals to help them accomplish those tasks. Remember, you're not just teaching numbers here. You're teaching your students life skills that will inevitably stick with them long after they've left your classroom. FAQ What are some good functional math IEP goals for autism? Good functional math IEP goals for students with autism should focus on practical, real-world applications. Some examples might include learning to count money, understanding time, managing a budget, or navigating measurements in cooking. What are appropriate IEP math goals for high school students? Appropriate IEP math goals for high school students depend on their individual needs but often include objectives like calculating percentages, solving real-world algebra problems, interpreting data from graphs, and understanding geometry in practical contexts, such as measuring dimensions. What is an example of a functional goal? A functional goal might be learning to independently calculate the total cost of items at a grocery store, including sales tax, or accurately tracking income and expenses within a monthly budget. What are examples of functional needs in an IEP? Functional needs in an IEP may include developing skills in communication, social interaction, self-care, navigating the community, time management, or understanding concepts like money and scheduling. Further Reading News flash! Math doesn't have to be the dreaded subject for students in special education! Functional math can become the favorite subject of the day for students if special education teachers had age-appropriate and skill-relevant resources at their fingertips to teach essential skills that will prepare high school and transition-age students for everyday life. If educators had the right materials to teach their math lessons, it could be a positive, meaningful learning experience to prepare students for real life. And yes, I know what you are thinking: there aren't any age-appropriate resources for high school and transition-age students that address the everyday math skills they need to be successful in daily life and employment settings. Well, GOOD NEWS! The Functional Math Curriculum is the resource to teach the practical math problems that mirror everyday life experiences. But, before I review how the Functional Math Curriculum is the solution so many special education teachers have been searching for for years, let's review some basics! What is Functional Math Skills? Functional math is the practical application of math skills we use daily and need to function in the real world. These foundational skills are typically taught to students with special needs in place of traditional middle school and high school math concepts. Students learning functional math will still be using problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and analytical thinking skills, as functional math (or transition math or life skill math, as some call it) addresses the mathematical concepts found within essential life skills. You can read more about basic math skills and check out 8 FREE functional math resources in my functional math resources for special education blog post. Examples of Real World Functional Math Concepts Include: While so many believe that Dollar Over and counting mixed coins and bills is the foundation of functional math, it stretches F-A-R beyond that! Real world functional math includes: Paying with the biggest dollar bills available (another cash payment method to use in place of or in addition to dollar up). Using a debit card to make in-store and online purchases and access cash from an ATM Using digital payment apps (like Zelle and Venmo) to send and receive money Determining when it is safe to share personal financial information (i.e. when setting up direct deposit at a new job) and when it isn't safe (i.e. when a friend
asks to use your debit card to buy something on their phone) Creating a household budget based on past bills Saving consistently with each paycheck and for future purchases Calculating the total of a bill, including sales, discount, sales tax, and tip Determining the best option for getting a purchase when viewing the shopping cart options, including Pick-Up, Delivery, and Shipping, based on immediacy of need and overall cost Identifying people who can assist in making smart daily and one-time financial decisions Reading and managing time to prioritize tasks and invoke a sense of urgency Among many, many others! Functional math skills stretch beyond daily life activities to include vocational skills, as well. For example: Number sense when making or ordering supplies for a small business or stocking the shelves in a store Converting common forms of measurement that mean the same thing (i.e. 30 day review = a review in 1 month) Calculating income, including how income tax and missed shifts impact pay, as well as estimating future gross pay based on previous paycheck values Among others! What (Unfortunately!) Currently Exists for Life Skill Math Instruction: So much of what currently exists for functional life skills math resources misses the mark.... The materials focus on drilling math facts, naming place value, and drawing a bar graph to match a word problem. (I mean, what 17 year old needs to draw a bar graph in their day-to-day-life?) The design is geared toward elementary-age students and skills max out at middle school-level Dollar Over/Dollar Up payment strategy. (Dollar over/dollar up isn't a bad skill to teach, it's just basic and quite limiting). The resource addresses the needs of students with learning disabilities who are still following the high school track of courses, including geometry and algebra level classes. (If your students are learning geometry and algebra-level skills, they aren't on a functional track.) The label of 'curriculum' is just math books, like spiral student workbooks, that flat-out lack engagement and relevancy of today's students (Like, there can't possibly be digital payment app word problems in there). Math programs that require special education teachers to read from a script (yes, like a robot) and stay on a strict timeline. I'm disheartened every time I hear that special education teachers are only able to find functional math resources with juvenile graphics. Or, first grade level math word problems about buying basket of fruit with smiling cartoon apples. Thankfully, there is now a better option out there. Keep reading! 1 | What You Need (and Deserve) in a Functional Math Curriculum for Special Education Students: You DESERVE the following: A comprehensive educational program, a.k.a curriculum, that addresses the needs of a wide range of grade levels, specifically high school through transition Daily lesson plans written clearly and to the point so you know what to tackle that day in just a few seconds, because you are busy! 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