Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Why Does It Matter?

1 in 68 children have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) with boys much more common than girls.

Between the 2005-2006 and the 2014-2015 school years, there was a 2.56% decrease in the number of students receiving special education services.

WHAT IS AUTISM?

Core Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Deficits in Social Communication
Academic Learning and Social Skills
Presence of Restricted, Repetitive Patterns of Behavior
CHARACTERISTICS OF ASD

Social Communication
- Challenges with understanding and responding to unspoken, assumed, abstract, or subtly changeable rules

PERSONAL LOOK INTO AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

When students with ASD respond in a way that is different than we expect, it is often rooted in these areas, rather than an inability to learn, purposely not listening, etc.
STUDENTS WITH ASD OFTEN RESPOND BEST TO:

- Visual input
- Concrete information
- Structure/consistency
- Opportunities for repetition of activities, materials, presentation of content, etc.
- Clearly defined opportunities for reinforcement

OVERALL CONCEPTS

- Abstract \(\rightarrow\) make it concrete
- Unspoken/assumed \(\rightarrow\) make it clear
- Verbal only \(\rightarrow\) make it visual
- Environment unstructured \(\rightarrow\) provide structure
- Environment overwhelming \(\rightarrow\) make it calm/more predictable

SEEK EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION WHEN IMPLEMENTING EBPS

NATIONAL AUTISM CENTER, NATIONAL STANDARDS PROJECT

Research Findings
- Established
- Emerging
- Unestablished
- Ineffective

Professional Judgment
- Proper Training
- Adequate Resources
- Sufficient Evidence

Values and Preferences

Capacity

VIEW LEARNING AS A BEHAVIOR...

Behavior is what we do in response to the things and events around us at any given time.

Learning is a change in behavior as a result of experience.

Increase in functional skills
- Promote generalization and maintenance
- Increase learned skills
- Decrease in challenging behavior
- Teach brand new skills
**USE THE A-B-C MODEL OF BEHAVIOR**

**Antecedent (A)**
- Events that occur immediately BEFORE the behavior
- Can be altered to increase or decrease the occurrence of the behavior

**Behavior (B)**
- Measurable and observable response to the things and events around us at any given time

**Consequence (C)**
- Events that occur immediately AFTER the behavior
- Can increase or decrease the likelihood that the person will display the behavior again

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**FIND THE A-B-C**

**Antecedent Strategies: Set the Stage for Success**

- Reduce predictability
- Clarify expectations

- Environmental Arrangement
- Visual Supports
- Schedules
- Other Visual Cues
- Task Analysis

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**ENVIRONMENTAL ARRANGEMENT**

- Refers to the way we set up and organize each area in the classroom
- To systematically use the environment as a learning tool

- Reduce wall art/decōr
- Separate adult-directed and child-directed materials
- Limit accessibility to materials
- Visually define expectations
- Strategically arrange areas of classroom based on what will be in line of vision
- Provide organizational structure
SET THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS

- Clarify expectations
- Establish predictability
- Reduce Distractions

Environmental Arrangement
- Schedules
- Other Visual Cues
- Task Analysis

SCHEDULES: CLASSROOM-WIDE

- Provides a visual representation of the day
  - Include activity and time range
  - Post so that students can see
  - Model how to use and refer to frequently
  - Include a symbol/word to represent when the schedule will change (special events)

- Visual Supports

- Schedules
- Other Visual Cues
- Task Analysis

SCHEDULES: INDIVIDUAL DAILY

- Provides more specific support to individual students
  - Tailor level of detail and type of schedule to student needs
  - Balance preferred and non-preferred activities
  - Reference before and after activities
  - Make sure student manipulates schedule

- Visual Supports

- Schedules
- Other Visual Cues
- Task Analysis

TASK ANALYSIS

- Used to break down and teach activities that involve multiple steps
- Used when:
  - Task has multiple steps
  - Activity is particularly long
  - Task is repeated frequently
  - Students require multiple prompts to complete task successfully
  - Student is intended to complete task independently

- Visual Supports

- Schedules
- Other Visual Cues
- Task Analysis
OTHER VISUAL CUES

What are areas of the day where my students are expected to follow unspoken/abstract rules in order to be successful?

ACADEMIC

BEHAVIORAL

SOCIAL

ANTECEDENT STRATEGIES: COMMON MISTAKES

- Absence of clear boundaries
- Access to too many items/distractors
- Quiet spaces too close to loud spaces
- Visual supports not accessible, explicitly taught and/or regularly referenced
- Use of visual supports is “faded” out

CONSEQUENCE STRATEGIES

Incorrect/Inappropriate Response
- Prompt to correct response
- Minimize attention
- Follow through so student demonstrates correct response

Correct Response
- Provide immediate, specific, and clear reinforcement/praise

WHAT IS REINFORCEMENT?

Any event or thing that follows a behavior and increases the likelihood that the person will demonstrate that behavior again in similar situations.

HOW TO USE REINFORCEMENT

- Think creatively about what might be reinforcing for your student(s)
- Choose behavior(s) to reinforce and include expectations visually
- Provide reinforcement immediately and contingent only on appropriate behavior
- If student is earning tokens, pair earning tokens with behavior specific praise

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Use the characteristics of ASD as an anchor for how you view/approach challenges with a student with ASD.
- Remember that every student with ASD is different (just like every one is different).
- Think about what rules are assumed/unsaid in a given situation.
- Think about how the environment may be contributing to the situation.
- Focus on prevention rather than only reaction.
- Focus on what you want your student to do, rather than what you want them to stop doing.
“IF YOU MAKE THE WORLD BETTER FOR KIDS, YOU MAKE IT BETTER FOR EVERYBODY.”

KID PREZ