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Effective Strategies for Students with Autism in the Classroom

October 28, 2013

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Today’s Objectives

• Identify five strategies to support children with autism in the classroom
• Identify three new visual supports to use in the classroom
• Identify two ways to provide positive reinforcement in the classroom
• Identify three new ways to provide better verbal instruction to students with autism
• Identity the steps of two classroom activities in order to simplify the activity for a student with autism
Today’s Outline

• Review Autism Spectrum Disorders

• Five effective strategies for reducing challenging behavior

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

• Life-long

• Core deficits
  • Social reciprocity
  • Communication
  • Overall adaptive functioning

• Usually evident during the first three years of life

• Symptoms range from mild to severe
Causes

• Uncertain

• Possibility of multiple causes

• Genetic influence

• “Two Hit” Theory

Prevalence

• 1 in 88 children

• 5:1 boys to girls

• Distributed throughout the world in all races, nationalities, and social classes

• More common than pediatric cancer, diabetes and AIDS combined

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012)
Social Deficits

• May prefer to be alone

• Difficulty with relationships

• Difficulty understanding social rules of the school

• Socially naïve

• Difficulty imitating actions of others and learning through observation

Learning Deficits

• Problem solving

• Organizational skills

• Generalization

• Discrepancy in learning
Behavioral Deficits

- Change and transitions
- Easily frustrated
- Low motivation to do because “I said so”
- Self-monitoring
- Pre-occupation with certain items, routines, or rituals

Communication Deficits

- Non-verbal communication
- Expressing themselves
- Asking for help
- Asking for a break
- Verbal directions
Strengths

• Memory

• Visual learners

• Black and white thinking

• Straightforward, honest, objective

• Focus on topics of interest

1. Classroom structure and predictability
Why are classrooms so hard for students with ASD?

• Noise, lights, smells, touching
• Teachers use lots of words!
• Things change often and quickly
• Other people are not predictable
• Reinforcers are not always obvious

Environmental Arrangement

• Provide boundaries and spatial cues
  • Ex: staff vs student areas

• Decrease distractions

• Break area

• Furniture arrangement
Daily Routines and Schedule

- Balance schedule
- Consistent routine
- Teach students the schedule
- Provide notice and warning of changes ahead of time

Classroom Checklist

(refer to handout “classroom management checklist”)

continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are rules, routines, and procedures posted in a manner that all could read or understand (visuals)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are routines explicitly taught and followed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are all materials organized and easily accessible?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do instructional areas of the classroom have clear, visual boundaries for students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the daily schedule of activities posted and reviewed regularly?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do children have access to various activities throughout the day?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the daily schedule provide each student with regular time periods for independent work, one-to-one instruction, small and large group activities, socialization, and free time?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does each student spend most of his/her time engaged in active learning activities, with little or no unstructured down time?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are lesson objectives developed based on students’ functioning levels?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are assignments relevant and meaningful to students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do children learn within meaningful (i.e., relevant to their interests and experiences) contexts?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are oral directions paired with pictures, icons, or written words that students can read?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the pace of the instruction appropriate for the needs of all students?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the curriculum adapted for those who are behind as well</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Visual Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Is specific academic praise provided during guided practice?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Is specific academic praise provided during independent practice?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Is the goal of social acceptance by peers emphasized?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Are friendships between students with and without disabilities promoted?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Is the number of rules limited to no more than 5?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Are reinforcers (verbal, nonverbal, items, activities) available to all that earn them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Are reinforcers varied and individualized?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Are students prompted or pre-corrected to increase the likelihood that they will follow expectations?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Are consequences for rule violation consistent and the same for all students?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Are consequences delivered consistently and in a timely manner?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples

• Environmental Cues
• Calendars, Schedules
• Checklists
• Timers
• Social Stories
• Assignment Modifications
• Teacher/Student “Signals”

Purpose

• Clarify expectations
• Prepare for transitions
• Provide motivation
• Decrease verbal directions
• Teach routines
Visual Support Tips

• Keep it Simple!

• Use free visuals when available

• Recruit help to make the visuals

• Modify as needed

Visual Supports Examples
Rosedale Library Picture Book

Story Time

Rules

1. Quiet Time

2. Time to Listen

3. Sit Nicely

4. Time to Move

5. Show Thanks
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>Wash Hands w/ Soap</td>
<td>2 min prep</td>
<td>P:SP</td>
<td></td>
<td>C1 ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CA-1 Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>Hand Washing</td>
<td>2 min prep</td>
<td>P:SP</td>
<td></td>
<td>C1 ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CA-1 Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Hand Washing</td>
<td>2 min prep</td>
<td>P:SP</td>
<td></td>
<td>C1 ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CA-1 Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>Hand Washing</td>
<td>2 min prep</td>
<td>P:SP</td>
<td></td>
<td>C1 ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CA-1 Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 AM</td>
<td>Hand Washing</td>
<td>2 min prep</td>
<td>P:SP</td>
<td></td>
<td>C1 ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CA-1 Bath</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CA-1 Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 AM</td>
<td>Hand Washing</td>
<td>2 min prep</td>
<td>P:SP</td>
<td></td>
<td>C1 ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CA-1 Bath</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Timers
3. Teaching Instruction

Verbal Directions

- Short, direct, and to the point
- Add a visual
- Consistent during new activities
Corrective Statements

• “No” can be a trigger

• Try “Nice try, this time __________.”

• Re-direction, using positive statements

• Tell them what you want them to do versus what you don’t want them to do
  ▪ Walking feet
  ▪ Listening bodies

Are we providing the student with choices?

"My wife said it was up to me - I could come to her sister’s wedding next weekend, or go to Vegas with you and the guys. Guess what I chose?"
Choices

• Alleviate power struggles

• Student sense of control

• Examples:
  • Choices of materials
  • Order of activity
  • Time/length

4. Reinforcement
What is reinforcement?

- Anything given to someone to increase the likelihood the behavior will:
  - Happen more often
  - Happen for a longer period of time
  - Improve in quality

Bribery or Reinforcement?

- **Bribery** = after behavior starts
- **Reinforcement** = before behavior starts
- All about the timing...
Reinforcement ideas

• Extra attention
• Student helper
• Break
• Choice for activity or task
• Peer interaction
• Student specific reinforcers

Token Reward System

• Delayed gratification
• Token represents expectation for reinforcement
• Helpful when moving away from immediate reinforcement
Project PEAK, 2012

I am working for:

symbol here

token here

cookies

continued
Tips for reward board

• Convenient reinforcers
• Behavior = token immediately
• Gradually increase expectations
• Teach the reward board

Common Pitfalls

• Used as bribery
• Expectation too high or not clear to student
• Reinforcer loses power
• Strong reinforcers not used due to difficulty taking them away from student
5. Alternative Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observable Behaviors (Information they are giving us)</th>
<th>Unobservable Skill Deficits (Our interpretation of the information)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding work activities</td>
<td>Communication challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screaming</td>
<td>Difficulty interacting with others socially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitting</td>
<td>Cognitive deficits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biting</td>
<td>Sensory impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laying head on desk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocking back and forth in chair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating words and phrases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project PEAK, 2012
Wa!!!!!!!
I want juice mommy!

I'm so bored, I'm going to play on my iPhone.

I'm tired, I am going in to my room and resting.

Wa!!!!!!!!

I really want some juice

I am bored with this activity

I am tired, I need a break!
Your goal is to fill their toolbox!

Alternative Skills

• Communication:
  • help, break, attention, alternate activity/assignment

• Self-Management Skills

• Academic skills

• Problem solving skills

• Teach peers to ignore problem behavior

• Other?
Teaching the skill

1. Define the skill
2. Break down into small steps
3. Prompt for success
4. Reinforce
5. Communicate with team

Let’s Practice!
Student who prefers to be alone?

Student who has difficulty understanding social rules of the school.
Student who has difficulty learning through observation.

Student who has difficulty with change and transition.
Student who gets frustrated easily.

Student who is not motivated to do because “I said so.”
Student with a pre-occupation with certain routines, items, rituals.

Student who has difficulty understanding non-verbal cues.
Questions?

Thank you!

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Resources/References:

www.cdc.gov
http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/
http://www.ocali.org/center/autism
www.autismclassroom.com
www.nationalautismcenter.org
http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/