

Developing Effective Early Education Programs for Young Children with Autism

Sara McCracken, Psy.D., BCBA
Director of Young Learners Preschool and Early
Educational Programs, The Help Group

The Help Group

- Early Education Program, Sherman Oaks:
 - Youngest children from 3 Nonpublic Schools for children with Autism Spectrum and Related Diagnoses
 - Young Learners Preschool, Mild to Severe Disability
 - Bridgeport Classes, K-2, Mild to Moderate Disability
 - Sunrise Classes, K-4, Moderate to Severe Disability
- Specialized schools for children with Autism and related strengths and needs



Key Components of Effective School Programs

- Assessment - Ongoing
- Multidisciplinary Collaboration
- Developmentally Appropriate
- Individualized
- Specialized Curriculum & Programming
- Evidence Based Practices
- Intensity of Engagement
- Structure (Environment, Schedule, Tasks)
- Use of Visuals (including technology, AAC)
- Natural Environment Teaching
- Family Involvement
- Staff Training

Assessment

- Initial planning and ongoing
 - IEPs
 - Cognitive Ability
 - Adaptive Skills
 - Social
 - Self Care
 - Social Skills
 - Communication
 - Motor/ Sensory Motor
 - Pre-Academics/ Early Academics
 - Behavior
 - VB-MAPP (Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program)
 - DRDP (Desired Results Developmental Profiles)
 - Curriculum Based



Multidisciplinary Collaboration

- Teacher
- Speech and Language Pathologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Psychologist
- Behaviorist
- Physician/ Medical
- Teaching Assistants
- Family

Developmentally Appropriate

- Programming is not one size fits all
- Increased awareness of Developmental models of learning
 - Cognitive, Communication, Sensory Motor, Executive Functioning, etc.
- Programs are guided by information about child development and learning
- Based on each child's strengths and needs
- Social and cultural contexts



Individualized

- Goals
- Intervention Strategies
 - Accommodations
 - Modifications
 - Evidence Based Interventions
- Evaluation Criteria
- Determined by child's needs, strengths and interests and family concerns, priorities and resources
- Teach to the child's strengths, what can they do

Specialized Curriculum

- In addition to school curriculum, core curriculum to address specific needs for a child with Autism
 - Learning to learn skills
 - Attending to the environment
 - Joint Attention
 - Engagement, preferred activities
 - Language, expressive and receptive
 - Pragmatics
 - Play Skills
 - Social Interaction Skills



Program Planning

- Make sure goals and curriculum are
 - developmentally appropriate
 - meaningful
 - data driven
- Plan in NUMEROUS learning opportunities, all throughout the day
- Teachable moments occur every moment of the day
- Plan in generalization and maintenance
- Teach multiple exemplars
- Have positive behavior support plans in place

Evidence Based Interventions

- National Autism Center (Part of the May Institute) (2009) initiated the *National Standards Project*
 - *Promotion of Evidence Based Practice*
 - Goal was to promote evidence based practice in schools (focus under age 22)
 - Updated 2015
 - Phase 2 evaluated studies published between 2007 and 2012 including educational and behavioral interventions under age 22 (and above 22)
- National Autism Center. (2015). Findings and Conclusions: National Standards Project, phase 2. Randolph, Massachusetts

NAC: 14 Established Treatments

1. Behavioral Interventions
2. Cognitive Behavioral Intervention Packet
3. Comprehensive Behavioral Treatment for Young Children
4. Language Training
5. Modeling
6. Natural Teaching Strategies
7. Parent Training
8. Peer Training Package
9. Pivotal Response Training
10. Schedules
11. Scripting
12. Self Management
13. Social Skills Package
14. Story Based Intervention

The National Professional Development Center

- Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Researchers have identified evidence-based practices for children and youth with ASD.
- This information, in turn, has been translated into online modules that have been used as part of a training process for promoting special education teachers' use of evidence-based practices (EBPs) for students with ASD.

The National Professional Development Center

- Antecedent Based Intervention
- Cognitive Behavioral Interventions
- Differential Reinforcement of Alternative, Incompatible, Other Behaviors
- Discrete Trial Teaching
- Exercise
- Extinction
- Functional Behavioral Assessment
- Functional Communication Training
- Modeling
- Naturalistic Intervention
- Parent Implemented Intervention
- Peer Mediated Instruction and Intervention
- Picture Exchange Communication System
- Pivotal Response Training
- Prompting
- Reinforcement
- Response Interruption/ Redirection (RIR)
- Scripting
- Self Management
- Social Narratives
- Social Skills Training
- Task Analysis
- Technology Aided Instruction and Intervention
- Time Delay
- Video Modeling
- Visual Supports

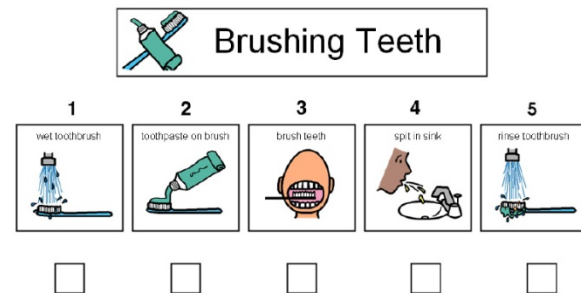
Intensity of Engagement

- Time that a child is spent engaging in teaching activity
- Time child is actively learning
- School, home, community
- Preference Assessments
- Motivating activities



Visual Supports

- Pictures
- Written words
- Objects
- Visual Boundaries
- Schedules
- Maps
- Labels
- Organization systems



Structured Physical Environment

- Structured and organized
- Distraction free teaching areas
- Visual supports/ organizational aides
- Sensory items
- Defined spaces



- Communication Temptations:
 - Reinforcers visible but out of reach
- Communication tools readily accessible
- Consultation from speech and occupational therapists



Structured Classroom Schedule

- Instruction and programming is scheduled throughout the entire day
- Meal times, bathroom, & playground times are all instructional times
- Create a schedule of the day:
 - What goals are you addressing during each part of the day? What materials do you need?
 - How are you targeting? What data collecting?
 - Who is responsible for what?
- Downtime is often equated with self stimulatory and other maladaptive behaviors

Schedules

- Increase predictability
- Help with transitioning
- Help to promote greater independence
- Various types of schedules
 - First then
 - Full Day
 - Steps of an activity
 - Pointing to it/ crossing off
 - Removable
 - Pictures and/or words
 - Pictures: Digital photos, Generalized Photos, Icons

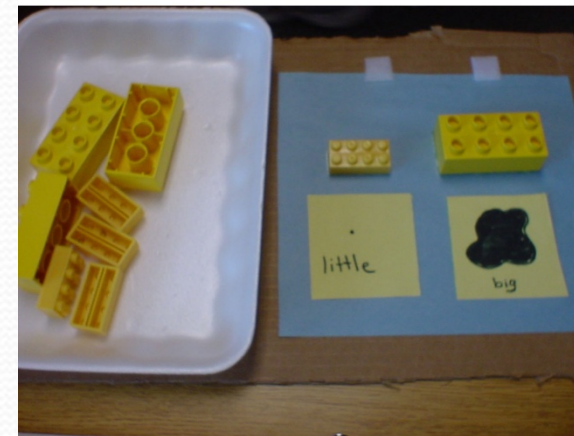


Schedules



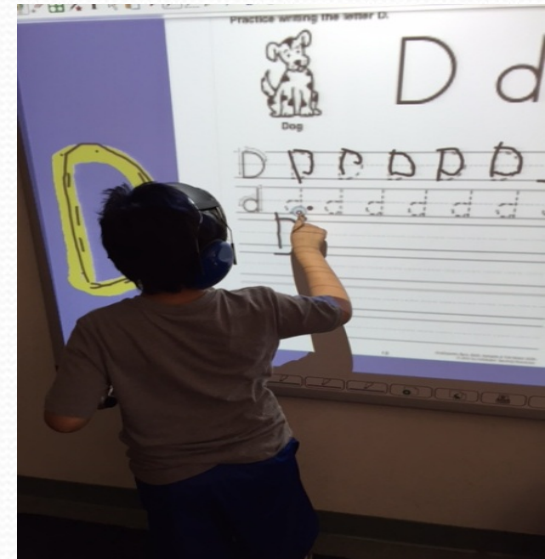
Structured Tasks and Work Systems

- TEACCH
- Visuals, hands on
- Organized
- Increases independence
- Resources:
 - Tasks Galore
 - Pinterest



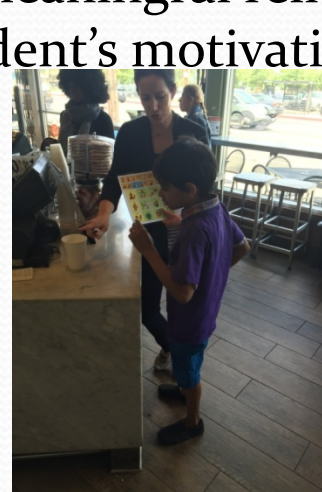
Integration of Technology

- Team boards
- Video Modeling
- Learning applications
- Adaptive equipment



Natural Environment Teaching

- Important to perform skills in environments where they naturally occur
- Include programming for Generalization
 - Teach skill in a controlled environment and then gradually vary materials, location, instructors –or–
 - Embed it into teaching from the beginning
- Teach in the context of the daily routine
- Use direct and natural consequences- meaningful reinforcers directly related to skill being taught- follow student's motivation
- Community Based Instruction



Family Involvement

- Family
- Consistency across home and school
- Generalization
- Family Support and networking
- Community

Staff Training: Key Components

- Assessment - Ongoing
- Multidisciplinary Collaboration
- Developmentally Appropriate
- Individualized
- Specialized Curriculum & Programming
- Evidence Based Practices
- Intensity of Engagement
- Structure (Environment, Schedule, Tasks)
- Use of Visuals (including technology, AAC)
- Natural Environment Teaching
- Family Involvement
- Staff Training

Acknowledgements

Administrators:

Pamela Clark
Jason Vaske

Administrative Assistant:

Jennifer Ross

Behaviorist:

Ryan Bergstrom

Behavior Interventionist:

David Goodman

Teachers:

Varduhi Shirinyan
Florence Menashy
Emily Hanselman
Gemma Brookman
Kerianne Dudley
Stacey Roberts
Maricris Gomez

Service Providers:

Nicole Barish
Sara Rhodehouse
Christie Fischer
Claire Baxley
LaToya Henry
Rita Miller
Kim Liebowitz
Elizabeth McBrearty
Tia Bruno
Jason Petro

And many very talented, motivated teaching assistants!

