1A: Executive Function and Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Schools

Presenter: Kari Sassu, Ph.D., NCSP

Description:
This session will review the components of executive function, the role of executive functions in daily activities, and discuss commonly encountered difficulties among those with ASD. Interventions and effective strategies for addressing executive functioning difficulties within the schools will be presented.

Objectives/Outcomes:
1. Attendees will be able to summarize the components of executive function, the role of executive functions in daily activities, and commonly encountered difficulties among those with ASD.
2. Attendees will be able to identify several effective strategies for addressing executive functioning difficulties.

Target Audience:
Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, Paraprofessionals, School Psychologists, School Administrators and Speech Language Pathologists

Biography:
Kari Sassu, Ph.D., NCSP is an Associate Professor in the Counseling and School Psychology Department and the Coordinator of the School Psychology program at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU). She also serves as a member of the Center for Excellence on Autism at SCSU. Previously, Dr. Sassu worked within the Center for Behavioral Education and Research at the University of Connecticut, where she served as the Implementation Coordinator for School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports in numerous urban school districts. Her professional experience also includes services as a school psychology practitioner in a public school, conducting neuropsychological evaluations of children and young adults, and providing in-patient rehabilitation counseling to adult patients. Dr. Sassu earned a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology and a Master’s degree in Psychological Services from the University of Pennsylvania. She holds a Master’s degree and Sixth Year Professional Diploma in Educational Leadership from Southern Connecticut State University, and a doctorate in Educational Psychology from the University of Connecticut. Her current research interests include: interventions to improve the school experiences of children with ASD, prevention strategies and intervention methodologies aimed at eradicating problematic behavior among school children, and the employment of strategies that capitalize on the mind-body connection to reduce negative effects of various health/medical conditions.

1B: New Directions in Understanding and Treating Social Competence in ASD

Presenter: Matthew D. Lerner, Ph.D.

Description:
This session will include a brief history and overview of interventions designed to address social challenges among children and teens with ASD. The presenter will introduce and discuss the differences in various treatment models, using these as a way to ask questions about what types of treatments might work best for individuals. Research which aims to advance evidence-based understanding and treatment of social challenges in ASD will be summarized.
Objectives/Outcomes:
1. Participants will develop a basic understanding of the theoretical assumptions and underlying social competence and interventions for youth with ASD.
2. Participants will be able to describe the distinction between social knowledge and social performance problems, and the unique implications of each for intervention design and content.
3. Participants will learn about the emerging research to optimize social competence interventions.

Target Audience:
Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, Paraprofessionals, School Psychologists, School Administrators and Speech Language Pathologists

Biography:
Matthew D. Lerner, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Psychology, Psychiatry, and Pediatrics in the Department of Psychology at Stony Brook University, where he directs the Social Competence and Treatment Lab. He received his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Virginia. He completed his Internship in Child Clinical Psychology at the University of Chicago Medical Center, as well as Fellowships in Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities at the University of Illinois – Chicago, and in Evolutionary and Ontogenetic Dynamics through the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin, Germany. He is the founding Director and current Research Director of the Spotlight Program at the Northeast Arc in Massachusetts, a year-round program for social competence and confidence development, serving more than 200 youth annually. He has provided clinical services for children, adolescents, and adults in hospital, clinical, educational, and community settings; he currently supervises clinical psychology Doctoral students seeing child and adolescent cases in the Krasner Psychological Center. He has presented at more than 100 national and international conferences on topics related to social development and developmental disorders.

Dr. Lerner’s research focuses on understanding emergence and “real world” implications of social problems in children and adolescents (especially those with Autism Spectrum Disorders [ASD]), as well as development, evaluation, and dissemination of novel, evidence-based approaches for ameliorating those problems. He has published more than 50 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters; he serves on the Editorial Boards of the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, the Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, the Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, and Behavior Therapy; and he is Co-Chair of the Autism Spectrum & Developmental Disabilities Special Interest Group at the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies. Dr. Lerner has received grants and awards from organizations including the National Institutes of Health, the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation, the Simons Foundation, the Medical Foundation, the American Psychological Association, the Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Most recently, he was a Finalist for the Director’s Early Independence Award at the National Institutes of Health, received a Bio-behavioral Research Award for Innovative New Scientists (BRAINS) from the National Institute of Mental Health, as well as Young Investigator Awards from the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation (NARSAD) and the International Society for Autism Research, and obtained the Rising Star designation from the Association for Psychological Science.

2A: Learning Better Ways to Cope: Teaching Individuals with ASD Skills to Replace Challenging Behaviors

Presenter: Melissa Rinaldi, Ph.D.

Description:
This session focuses on practical ways to teach coping skills to individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Techniques to assist with anxiety and problem-solving difficulties are discussed. Emphasis is placed on evidence-based strategies that can be taught and used in both the home and school environment.

Objectives/Outcomes:
1. Participants will be able to identify reasons why it might be appropriate to teach coping skills to individuals with ASD.
2. Participants will be able to describe different techniques to assist individuals on the spectrum with anxiety and problem-solving difficulties.
3. Participants will be able to identify strategies that could be taught to an individual with ASD and used in both a home and school environment.

Target Audience:
Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, Paraprofessionals, School Psychologists, School Administrators and Speech Language Pathologists

Biography:
Melissa L. Rinaldi received her B.A. degree in psychology from New York University, and her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in clinical psychology from the University at Albany, State University of New York. She is a licensed clinical psychologist in the states of New York and Rhode Island. Dr. Rinaldi has worked with individuals with disabilities, their families, and members of their support team in both clinical and research capacities. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Alpert Medical School of Brown University where she provided individual and group therapy to children and adolescents with combined developmental disabilities and psychiatric conditions. Dr. Rinaldi has extensive experience conducting diagnostic, cognitive, and adaptive assessments of individuals with developmental disabilities and providing behavioral and educational consultation services to homes, schools, and residential facilities. Her research focus is on the development, administration, and evaluation of training models and treatment approaches for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. She currently coordinates research projects and clinical services at the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities.

2B: Encouraging and Shaping Desired Pro-Social Behavior in Students with ASD

Presenter: Merlyn Nair, MS.Ed.

Description:
Systematic teaching of pro-social behaviors can reduce challenging behavior in students with ASD and lead to an increase in independence and an improvement in overall quality of life. The purpose of this session is to discuss how to select appropriate pro-social goals, develop effective and motivating teaching plans, and expand upon success.

Objectives/Outcomes:
1. Participants will be able to identify desired behaviors that will impact quality of life at home, school, and/or community.
2. Participants will develop strategies to ensure success through environmental modifications and/or peer support.
3. Participants will be able to describe ways to motivate students to perform desired behaviors and build on learned skills.
Target Audience:
Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, Paraprofessionals, School Psychologists, School Administrators and Speech Language Pathologists

Biography:
Merlyn received a Bachelor of Science degree in communication sciences and disorders from Syracuse University, and a Master of Science degree in Education with a concentration in severe disabilities from Simmons College. Her professional experience includes working with a wide range of students on the autism spectrum, conducting functional behavior assessments and developing, implementing and training staff on academic and behavior programing. Merlyn was employed at the New England Center for Children where she worked with adolescent males in a residential facility. She then went abroad to Abu Dhabi, UAE to work at their sister school where she helped children on the autism spectrum transition back to an inclusive public school classroom. She is currently an Autism Education Specialist at the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, where she consults with school districts and provides trainings to education professionals throughout New York State.

3A: Learn to Play, Play to Learn
Presenter: Dana Reinecke, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Description:
This presentation will focus on the importance of play as a basis for learning in other areas; including language, social skills and more. How to select age-appropriate play skills as targets, and strategies for teaching independent and social play skills will be described. The relevance of play to other areas of functioning will be discussed, including practical examples. The use of play in teaching will also be addressed.

Objectives/Outcomes:
1. Participants will be able to identify age-appropriate play skills as targets.
2. Participants will be able to use evidence-based practices to teach play skills.
3. Participants will be able to plan teaching strategies using play to develop other skills.

Target Audience:
Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, Paraprofessionals, and Speech Language Pathologists

Biography:
Dana Reinecke is a doctoral level Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA-D) and a New York State Licensed Behavior Analyst (LBA). Dana is an Assistant Professor in the CASE Program (Concentration in Autism and Special Education) with the Department of Special Education and Literacy at Long Island University Post. Prior to this, Dana was an Assistant Professor and Department Chair for the Center for Applied Behavior Analysis at The Sage Colleges. Dana provides training and consultation to school districts, private schools, agencies, and families for individuals with disabilities. She has provided consultation and training throughout New York, as well as in Mexico, Australia, and Northern Ireland. She has presented original research and workshops on the treatment of autism and application of ABA at regional, national and international conferences. She has published her research in peer-reviewed journals, written chapters in published books, and co-edited book on ABA and autism. Current areas of research include the use of technology to support students with and without disabilities, self-management training of college students with disabilities, and
online teaching strategies for effective college and graduate education. She has served as a Representative at
Large (2010-2012), Secretary (2012-2014), President-Elect (2015-2016), and conference co-chair (2015-2016)
for the New York State Association for Behavior Analysis (NYSABA). She will begin a 2-year term as NYABA
President in January 2017.

3B: Students with ASD on their Way to College: Strategies for Success

Presenter: Lorraine E. Wolf, Ph.D.

Description:

The college degree is a proven path towards independence for young people with ASD. The road to
that degree, however, differs from that of typical young adults. The best outcomes are achieved when
families, clinicians and schools can work together. This talk will discuss the college process from pre-
application to transition, including common pitfalls, and steps to take in high school. Strategies for transition
and support that foster success before, during and after college will be highlighted.

Objectives/Outcomes:

1. Participants will be able to identify strategies to begin in high school for college-bound students with
   ASD.
2. Participants will be able to recognize legal distinctions in providing accommodations and services to
   college students with ASD.
3. Participants will be able to apply strategies for families and schools to aid the transition to college for
   students with ASD.

Target Audience:

Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, School
Psychologists, School Administrators and Speech Language Pathologists

Biography:

Dr. Wolf is the Director of Disability Services at Boston University. She holds a doctorate in clinical
neuropsychology from the City University of New York and has over 35 years of experience working with
children, adolescents and adults with neurodevelopmental disorders. She has taught experimental psychology,
assessment, and neuropsychology at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Dr. Wolf has published and
presented nationally and internationally on issues for students with attention and learning disorders,
psychiatric disabilities, and autism spectrum disorders. She holds faculty appointments in psychiatry and in
rehabilitation sciences at Boston University. She was a co-editor of Adult Attention Deficit Disorders: Brain
Mechanisms and Life Outcomes (2001, New York Academy of Sciences), is the senior co-editor of Learning
Disorders in Adults: Contemporary Issues (Psychology Press, 2008), and is the co-author of Students with
on the Spectrum: A College Guide for Parents (AAPC, 2011). Dr. Wolf’s interests include the neuropsychology
of attention disorders, and developing effective services for students with autism spectrum and other
psychiatric disabilities in higher education. Along with her co-presenter Jane Thierfeld Brown, she developed a
model of service delivery for college students entitled “Strategic Education for students with Autism Spectrum
Disorders”. She is the parent of twins, one of whom is on the spectrum.