Setting the Stage: Creating Environments to Enhance Outcomes for Students with ASD

Objectives

• Learn the proposed DSM V criteria
• Discuss contextual fit and its impact on implementing a plan in regards to:
  – Student characteristics
  – Variables of individual team members
  – Environmental variables

Public School/Community Agency

Adapted from Pierce & Tincani, 2007
Contextual Fit

- Central to team based intervention
- Addresses the compatibility of the intervention plan with variables in the environment

Variables to Consider

- 1. Characteristics of the student
- 2. Variables of individuals implementing the plan
- 3. Features of environments and systems within which the plan will be implemented

Characteristics of the Student with ASD
Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Lower Functioning
Below Average IQ, Mental Retardation, little or no verbal language

IQ < 70

- Rett's Disorder
- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
- Autism
- PDD-NOS

Higher Functioning
Average/Above Average IQ, verbal language, etc.

Asperger's Syndrome

Information obtained from: http://www.dsm5.org/ProposedRevisions/Pages/proposedrevision.aspx?rid=94

Watch for revisions and final criteria at: http://www.dsm5.org/ProposedRevisions/Pages/proposedrevision.aspx?rid=94

Must meet criteria A, B, C and D:

Autism Spectrum Disorder

DSM-IV Criteria
- Qualitative impairment in social interaction
- Qualitative impairment in communication
- Restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests and activities

Proposed Diagnostic Criteria

DSM-V

Autism Spectrum Disorder Proposed Diagnosic Criteria

Watch for revisions and final criteria at: http://www.dsm5.org/ProposedRevisions/Pages/proposedrevision.aspx?rid=94

Must meet criteria A, B, C and D:
Proposed Criteria A
Persistent deficits in social communication and interaction across contexts as manifested by ALL 3 of the following:
- deficits in social-emotional reciprocity
- deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction
- deficits in developing and maintaining relationships at appropriate level

Proposed Criteria B
Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities as manifested by at least 2 of the following:
- Stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movement or use of objects
- Excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior, or excessive resistance to change
- Highly restricted, fixated interests
  - Hyper or hypo-reactivity to sensory input

Proposed Criteria C
- Symptoms must be present in early childhood but may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capacities
Proposed Criteria D

- Symptoms together limit and impair everyday functioning

- (See chart for description of Severity Levels 3, 2, and 1)

Severity Chart

Level 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity Level for ASD</th>
<th>Social Communication</th>
<th>Restricted Interests and Repetitive Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 Required Support</td>
<td>Without supports in place, deficits in social communication cause noticeable impairment. Has difficulty initiating social interactions and demonstrates clear examples of atypical or unsuccessful responses to social overtures of others. May appear to have decreased interest in social interactions.</td>
<td>Rituals and repetitive behaviors (RRB’s) cause significant interference with functioning in one or more contexts. Resists attempts by others to interrupt RRB’s or be redirected from fixated interests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Severity Chart

Level 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity Level for ASD</th>
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<th>Restricted Interests and Repetitive Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 Requiring Substantial Support</td>
<td>Marked deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills; social impairments apparent even with supports in place; limited initiation of social interactions and reduced or abnormal response to social overtures from others.</td>
<td>RRBs and/or preoccupations or fixated interests appear frequently enough to be obvious to the casual observer and interfere with functioning in a variety of contexts. Distress or frustration is apparent when RRB’s are interrupted; difficult to redirect from fixated interest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Severity Chart
Level 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity Level for ASD</th>
<th>Social Communication</th>
<th>Restricted Interests and Repetitive Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills cause severe impairments in functioning; very limited initiation of social interactions and minimal response to social overtures from others.</td>
<td>Preoccupations, fixated rituals and/or repetitive behaviors markedly interfere with functioning in all spheres. Marked distress when rituals or routines are interrupted; very difficult to redirect from fixated interest or returns to it quickly.</td>
</tr>
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Thinking Differently

- Executive functioning – auditory processing and memory
- Visual & concrete thinking
- Seeing the big picture – attention to detail
- Adapting to change
- Special interests – different motivators
- Sensory differences
- “Social thinking”

Classroom Implication – Executive Functioning

- Difficulty with complex tasks or tasks that have multiple instructions
- “place keeping errors”
- Difficulty with tasks that require retention of a lot of verbal information
- May misunderstand what is said or respond inconsistently
- May be easily distracted/have shorter attention span
Classroom Implication –
Visual and Concrete Thinking
- May miss a teacher/peers humor or sarcasm
- May take longer to process verbal information
- Confusion with verbal instructions
- Can take metaphors literally
- Difficulties with subjects that require abstract thinking—like algebra

Classroom Implications –
Attention to Detail
- Appears distracted by details – difficult time with tasks that require larger picture thinking, like writing
- May be related to problem solving difficulties (only seeing the “facts” and not the whole picture)
- Difficulties generalizing from one situation to the next
- Use of logic and reasoning to process social situations
- May appear to have a greater comprehension than actually does due to strengths in decoding

Classroom Implications –
Adapting to Change
- Transitions may be difficult – student may take long time transition between tasks, avoid transition, exhibit anxiety
- Challenging behaviors may be associated with small or large changes in routines
- Student may resist trying new things
- May rigidly follow rules – not understand exceptions to rules

NYS
Classroom Implications – Special Interests
- May be most motivated by their special interest – can result in a need to select different motivators from other students
- Other students may view intense and sometimes age-inappropriate interest as odd or stigmatizing
- May not share interests with peers
- May become overly preoccupied with special interest and/or distracting at times

Classroom Implications – Sensory Differences
- Aversion and/or avoidance of people or places that may be over-stimulating
- May result in meltdowns
- Safety issues
- Failure to respond
- Increased anxiety
- May be distracted
- May exhibit behaviors that appear odd to peers

Classroom Implications – Theory of Mind
- Could appear argumentative/defiant
- May not see the value of engaging in interests of others
- Social misunderstanding may be common
- Difficulty understanding perspective of characters in stories
- Teasing and bullying
Individuals with ASD often can:

- Understand concrete concepts very well
- Understand context-specific language
- Memorize rote material quickly and easily
- Recall visual images and memories easily
- Think in a visual way
- Learn chunks of info quickly
- Learn to decode written language at an early age
- Have extraordinarily good long-term memory

From CT-ASRC.ORG

Individuals with ASD often can:

- Understand and use concrete rules and sequences
- Be perfectionistic in approach to tasks
- Can be very precise and detail oriented
- Be depended upon to maintain schedules and be on time
- Have an average or even way above average intelligence
- Be honest even to a fault

From CT-ASRC.ORG

Individuals with ASD often can:

- Be extremely focused if it’s a pleasurable task
- Be charming in their innocence
- Have difficulty being devious
- Have a strong sense of integrity
- Have an excellent sense of direction
- Be very compliant when expectations are clearly understand
- Be very genuine; may not understand motive behind to impress others, and therefore don’t bother

From CT-ASRC.ORG
Methods for Understanding Your Students with ASD

• A process-oriented approach to empowering people with disability labels
• Focuses on the people and their needs; putting them in charge of defining the direction for their lives
• Focus not on the systems that may or may not be available
• Ultimately leads to greater inclusion as valued members of both community and society
• Involves the development of a "toolbox" of methods and resources that enable people with disability labels to choose their own pathways to success

Person-Centered Planning

• PCP video Michael Smull
Examples of P-C Plans

ASD Student Characteristics Profile

Contextual Assessment Inventory
- Social environment
  - What’s happening in student’s social-communicative environment that either supports or hinders success?
- Activities and routines
  - What activities or routines are established and are they preferred? Non-preferred? Supportive?
- Biological (student’s health/physical states)
  - How does health or status support or hinder student’s functioning?
Individuals Implementing the Plan

Why have a Team?

Why have a Team?

Why have a Team?

What is a Team?

• A group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task, job or project

• A team becomes more than just a collection of people when a strong sense of mutual commitment creates synergy, thus generating performance greater than the sum of the performance of its individual.
Characteristics of a Quality Team

- Team vs. group
- Shared understanding of purpose
- Commitment to the cause
- Driven by guidelines/goals
- Task vs. process

Core Team Members

- Knowledge/interest of individual child
- Knowledge of behavioral principles
- Knowledge of positive behavior supports
- Knowledge of systems/resources

Child Specific Team Members

- Primary Classroom Teacher(s)
- Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)
- Resource Teacher(s)
- Paraprofessional(s)
- Related Service Provider(s)
- Adults who interacts with child on regular basis
Team Roles and Responsibilities

- Leader
- Facilitator
- Recorder
- Time Keeper
- Child Specific Members

Characteristics of People Implementing the Plan

Variables of People Implementing the Plan

- Different instructors perceive the classroom environment in different ways which result in different styles of teaching
  - Lecture
  - Demonstration
  - Hands-on
  - Experimental
- How might your style impact students with ASD?
Enhancing Instructional Contexts for Students with ASD (EIC-ASD)

- Reflects current understanding of best practices for students with ASD
- Can be used to validate current practices and identify elements that could be improved

### EIC-ASD: Instruction

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<th>Insufficient</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Auditory Information Processing</td>
<td>Adults in classroom rely on verbal language without highlighting the most relevant information to students. Students are not given time to process auditory information.</td>
<td>Adults may use more words than necessary to convey relevant instructional information. Students may not be given enough time to process.</td>
<td>Adults use clear and concise verbal language paired with visual supports to convey essential instructional information and allow sufficient processing time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Teaching</td>
<td>Instruction includes abstract information that may not be understood or meaningful to students. Concepts and expectations are inappropriate for student abilities.</td>
<td>Most concepts and expectations are taught using concrete materials to maximize student understanding. Most activities/tasks are presented in a clear, concrete manner.</td>
<td>All instruction and materials are presented in a concrete manner to facilitate student understanding of the concepts and expectations. Activities/tasks are structured to match the student's abilities.</td>
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NYS’ Autism Program Quality Indicators

- The APQI are a compilation of the best practices in educating students with autism, which were developed to serve as a means of guiding quality improvement activities for schools and programs serving children with autism in New York state.
APQI: Instructional Activities

Instructional Activities: The program provides a variety of developmentally and functionally appropriate activities, experiences, and materials that engage students in meaningful learning.

Instructional activities:
- a) enhance response opportunities,
- b) are appealing and interesting,
- c) promote active engagement of the student,
- d) focus on basic skills before more complex skills,
- e) provide multiple opportunities for practicing skills identified on the IEP,
- f) are (whenver possible) embedded within ongoing and natural routines of home, school, vocational, and community settings.

Activities use a variety of instructional formats—one-to-one instruction, small group instruction, student-initiated interactions, teacher-directed interactions, play, peer-mediated instruction—based upon the skill to be taught and the individual needs of the student.

Variable of People

Implementing the Plan

- Relationship Quality
  - If a person with disabilities and their caregiver/teacher have poor rapport with one another, problem behavior is likely

- Negative Perceptions
  - “This student is out of control”
  - “This student needs help”
Building Rapport

- The extent to which students accept or “buy into” the goals the teacher has spelled out to the class,
- The student’s ability to work toward these goals,
- The teacher’s ability to care genuinely for students and to nurture their learning, and
- The student and teacher “connecting” emotionally and students’ motivation to participate actively in their education.

William Buskist and Bryan K. Saville of Auburn University

Teacher Behaviors that can Contribute to the Development of Rapport are:

- Showing a sense of humor
- Availability before, after or outside of class
- Encouraging class discussion
- Showing interest in their students
- Knowing students’ names
- Sharing personal insights and experiences with the class
- Relating course material in everyday terms and examples
- Understanding that students occasionally have problems that arise and inadvertently hinder their progress

William Buskist and Bryan K. Saville of Auburn University

Increase Ratio of Positive to Negative Responses

- Respond positively to appropriate behavior more often than responding negatively to inappropriate behavior
- USEFUL when adults responding with more negative statements for inappropriate behavior and/or when student exhibits behavior to get attention from adults
- SUGGESTION: 4 POSTIVE responses for every 1 NEGATIVE response

William Buskist and Bryan K. Saville of Auburn University
Use of Reinforcement and Motivation for the Student

- Critical to learning
- Differently motivated
- Observation - preferences
- What, when, how often, where
- Positive Reinforcement
- Consistency
- Generalizing and fading

How Do You Cope with Stress?

- Stop and turn to neighbor….what things do you find stressful about teaching students with ASD? How do you think this might impact those students? What do you do to relieve or cope with this stress?

Anyone willing to share?

Use of Reinforcement and Motivation for the Adult

- Just as reinforcement is critical for learning, it is also a huge piece of adults' lives
- Take a moment to think about what reinforces you during a tough day at work or home
- What are some motivational strategies you can implement for yourself?
Effects of Adult Stress on Student Performance

• Do you think your stress effects student performance in the classroom?

• Using Longitudinal and Momentary Analysis to Study the Impact of Middle School Teachers’ Stress on Teacher Effectiveness, Student Behavior and Achievement – Teresa McIntyre, Ph.D., University of Huston

Classroom Collaboration

• Paraprofessional Role
  – Support student learning
  – Help develop social skills
  – Help expand communication skills
  – Help expand appropriate relationships
  – Increase independence
  – Functional application of curriculum
  – Valuable resource to team

http://www.autismtoday.com/articles/ParaProfessional.htm

Reasons to “Burn the Chair”

Taken from Paula Kluth, “The Inclusive Classroom, and Learning Disabilities in Children”

• Separation from Classmates
• Dependence on Adults
• Impact on Peer Interactions
• Interference of Instruction from Other Students
• Do not do for a student what they can do for themselves
Classroom Collaboration

- How do we successfully utilize the Paraprofessional?

1. PTR Teacher/Para-educator Work Style Survey

   - Helps to identify each member’s preferred communication, supervision and work style

2. Over-reliance on Paraprofessional Tool

   - A mechanism for school teams to begin exploring if they are over-reliant on paraprofessionals or are using them inappropriately

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### PTR Work Style Score Comparison Sheet

- Helps to identify each member’s preferred communication, supervision and work style

### Over-Reliance on Paraprofessionals Screening Tool

- The number of paraprofessionals has increased, in part, because there is a general belief that one of the primary ways to support students with disabilities in general education is to assign a paraprofessional.

- Students with disabilities are physically separated within the classroom (e.g. back or side of the room) to work with a paraprofessional.

- Paraprofessionals provide academic support in subjects where they are under- or unsupervised.

Giangreco & Broer, 2007
Home-School Collaboration

- Teacher and Parent/Guardian Communication
  - Form of communication
  - Keep communication as positive and free of blame as possible
  - Stay clear of jargon
  - Expectations
  - Discuss problems as they arise

Barriers to Positive Home-School Collaboration

- Cultural differences
- Parents’ experiences in school as students themselves
- Economic and time constraints
- Lack of technology/technology information
Overcoming Barriers with Home

- Seek to understand cultural and language differences
- Provide guidelines or checklists to structure how parents can have their concerns addressed and resolved in a more proactive manner
- Be flexible with meeting times; offer consistent time for parents to contact you
- Survey parents access to technology

Teacher and Parent/Guardian Communication Tools

http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/index.php?pageId=32

Teacher and Parent/Guardian Communication Tools
Teacher and Parent/Guardian Communication Tools

Features of Environments and Systems
Environments and Systems

- Classroom
- Other school settings
- School-wide systems
- Home
- Community

Features of the Classroom

- Take inventory of the environment
  - Comprehensible?
  - Structured?
  - Sensory challenges considered?

The Classroom Environment
Non-Classroom Environments
School-Wide Systems

Home Environment

- Does home environment use visual schedules and rules?
- Designated area for homework or projects?
- Homework tasks and home chores broken down? Reinforcement provided?

Strategy for Completing Homework

- Child chooses order in which to complete homework assignments in each subject
- Child completes a subject’s assignment and sets timer for 5 to 10 minutes
- Child is free for those minutes to do whatever he/she wishes
- Timer rings and child returns to table and completes the next subject’s assignment
- Re-set timer between each subject’s assignments until work is complete
Homework Contract

Matt’s “I Survived Homework” Contract

I am working for: 10 Minutes to talk about “Survivor” with Mr. Brown on Friday.

Goal: Four out of five homework assignments completed on time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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</table>

Did I earn my reward?

YES! Mr. Brown will meet with you during study hall on Friday.

No. Try harder next week. You can write about “Survivor” in your writing journal during 6th period if you would like.

The Big Four

- Time
- Money
- Staffing
- Administrative Support

Time

Money
Check out websites with free or low cost supplies/ideas/downloads…
www.interventioncentral.com
www.Do2learn.com
www.autisminternetmodules.org
http://mrsriley.com/home
http://room5ideas.com/
http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/index.php?pageId=32/
See your handouts for more!

Staffing
• Use para-educator optimally
  – How To Be a ParaPro by Diane Twachtman-Cullen
• Use student teachers/classroom volunteers
• Professional development…
  – Websites that offer video trainings
    • CARD Elluminate
  – Lunch time mini inservices
  – Be sure to provide training before implementation of something new
• Effective teaming
  – Define purpose, norms, roles, action steps/responsibilities, deadlines, and a method for monitoring and evaluation
Dealing with Resistance

- Divide and conquer (weakest → strongest)
- Offer reinforcers (goods, recognition, $)
- Meet them on their terms...what have you tried?
- Pilot with non-resistant staff and report results
- Coaching

Administrative Support

- Data collection/Supporting your case
  - Evidence based practice research
  - Collect data for yourself
  - Gather support from team members/parents
- Well-designed cost effective plan
  - Look at your context! A good idea that isn’t practical won’t sell!
- Pilot projects
  - Try something short term – collect data!

Selecting Interventions with Contextual Fit

1. Establish an evidence base for potential interventions
2. Solicit input and evaluate the compatibility of interventions with team members’ values
3. Assess the capacity of team members to support the interventions
Selecting Interventions with Contextual Fit

- 4. Assess the compatibility of the intervention with school wide programs and administrative support
- 5. Implement and evaluate the intervention

Questions?

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities
Phone: (518) 442-2574 or toll free 1+(866) 442-2574
Email: card@albany.edu
Website: http://www.albany.edu/autism

CARD Albany is now on Facebook
http://www.facebook.com/cardalbany

Required Coursework for Special Education Professionals now online – “Responding to the Needs of Students with ASD”
http://www.albany.edu/autism/NYSEDpage.shtml