One Size Doesn’t Fit All: Developing Effective Early Education Programs for Children with Autism

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The Help Group
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- **Early Education Program, Sherman Oaks:**
  - Nonpublic Schools (Young Learners, Bridgeport and Sunrise) for children with Autism Spectrum and Related Diagnoses
    - Preschool Classes, Mild to Severe Disability
    - Bridgeport K-2, Mild to Moderate Disability
    - Sunrise K-3, Moderate to Severe Disability
  - Full Day, 9-3p
Goal of Presentation

- Identify important components of effective, individualized early educational programs for children with autism
  - Multidisciplinary Team
  - Assessment
  - Evidence Based Intervention and Instruction

- Jane Kim, BCBA
  - Functional Analysis: Individualized Behavior Intervention
Multidisciplinary Team
Multidisciplinary Team

- Child and family/significant others

- Home, school and community organizations

- Who are some other members of the team?
  - Teachers, Teaching Assistants, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Adaptive PE Coaches, Behavior Specialists, Counselors, Psychologists, Medical Practitioners, Caseworkers, Vision or Hearing Specialists
Multidisciplinary Team

- Collaborative model of service provision
  - Therapists push in to the curriculum
  - Teacher & service provider collaborate to target goals
  - Work with children individually, in small groups, larger groups, in classroom or other settings
  - Collaborate on IEP goal development
  - Train staff, family and other members of the team
  - Input in curriculum design
  - Providers have expertise and training working with young children with autism
Multidisciplinary Team

- Family/Guardian Involvement
  - Daily Communication Log
  - Conferences
  - Observations with training component
  - Monthly training and support group
  - In home consultation
  - IEP Development
Multidisciplinary Team

- Staff Development
  - All staff working with and around the children should have an understanding of autism
  - Credentialed, specialized teachers and service providers
  - Experienced, trained teaching assistants

- Training Curricula Examples:
  - It’s Time for School! Building Quality ABA Educational Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
  - SKILLS (E-learning)
ASSESSMENT
Multidisciplinary Assessment

- Programming must be individualized and flexible and based on comprehensive assessment
  - Medical
  - Cognitive abilities
  - Communication
  - Motor
  - Sensory
  - Daily Living Skills
  - Social/ Emotional
  - Behavior
  - Executive Functioning
  - Academic Ability

Use this information to put together appropriate goals and treatment strategies!
Assessment

- In addition to Standards and Alternative Curriculum Guides
  - Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP; Sundberg)
  - Piloting SKILLS (Center for Autism and Related Disorders)
  - Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS; Lord)
VB-MAPP

- The VB-MAPP is a criterion-referred assessment tool, curriculum guide, and skill tracking system that is designed for children with autism, and other individuals who demonstrate language delays.

- Incorporates verbal behavior, developmental milestones and research from behavior analysis

- Components of the VB-MAPP include: Milestones Assessment, Barriers Assessment, Transition Assessment, Task Analysis and Skills Tracking, Placement and IEP Goal Development

- 5 components of the VB-MAPP provide:
  - baseline level of performance
  - a direction for intervention
  - a system for tracking skill acquisition
  - a tool for outcome measures
  - a framework for curriculum planning
VB-MAPP Milestones

- 170 measurable learning and language milestones that are sequenced and balanced across 3 developmental levels (0-18 months, 18-30 months, and 30-48 months)

- The skills assessed include mand, tact, echoic, intraverbal, listener, motor imitation, independent play, social and social play, visual perceptual and matching-to-sample, linguistic structure, echoics, group and classroom skills, and early academics.
Case Example:
VB-MAPP Milestones
VB-MAPP Barriers Assessment

- Assessment of 24 common learning and language acquisition barriers faced by children with autism or other developmental disabilities.

- By identifying these barriers, the teacher can develop specific intervention strategies to help overcome these problem areas, which can lead to more effective learning.
Case Example:
VB-MAPP Barriers
VB-MAPP Transition Assessment

- Contains 18 assessment areas and can help to identify whether a child is making meaningful progress and has acquired the skills necessary for learning in a less restrictive educational environment.

- This assessment tool can provide a measurable way for a child’s IEP team to make decisions and set priorities in order to meet the child’s educational needs.
VB-MAPP Transition Assessment

- Language, Social and Academic levels
  - What skills does the child have?
  - What barriers stand in the way?

- Learning Patterns
  - Generalization
  - Range of reinforcers
  - Rate of skills acquisition and retention
  - How learning from environment

- Self Help, Adaptability to Change, Self Directed Leisure Time
VB-MAPP: Task Analysis and Skills Tracking

- Provides a further breakdown of the skills

- There are approximately 900 skills presented covering the 16 areas of the VB-MAPP

- Once the Milestones have been assessed and the general skill level has been established, the task analysis can provide further information about a particular child.

- They also provide parents and teachers with a variety of activities that can facilitate generalization, maintenance, spontaneity, retention, expansion, and the functional use of skills in a variety of educational and social contexts.
VB-MAPP: Placement & IEP Goals

- Correspond with the four assessments areas
- Provides direction for Milestones
- Suggestions for IEP goals
SKILLS (CARD)

- Web Based assessment and programming guide
- Curriculum Areas
  - Language
  - Play
  - Adaptive Skills
  - Motor
  - Executive Functions
  - Cognition
  - Social Skills
  - Academic
SKILLS (CARD)

- Each activity provides information such as:
  - Average age ranges for when skills develop
  - Prerequisites necessary before teaching the skills in the activity
  - Sample Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals related to the skill
  - Ideas for setting up teaching materials and scenarios
  - Teaching points for ensuring the child's success in learning targeted skills
  - Ideas for programming for generalization
  - Printable materials such as teaching guides, tracking forms, visual aids, worksheets, and target checklists
  - Demonstration videos
Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule
(Lord, Rutter, DiLabore, Risi, 1999)

- ADOS is a semi-structured, standardized assessment for:
  - Communication
  - Social Interaction
  - Play & Imagination
  - Stereotyped Behaviors and Restricted Interests
Case Example: ADOS
Evidence Based Interventions
Evidence Based Interventions

- National Autism Center (2009): Evidence Based Practice and Autism in the Schools
  - 11 “established” treatments
    - thoroughly effective, well researched
  - 22 “emerging” treatments
    - some evidence but needs more research
  - “Unestablished” treatments
    - no sound evidence
NAC: 11 Established Treatments

- Antecedent Interventions
- Behavioral Interventions
- Comprehensive Behavioral Treatment for Young Children
- Joint Attention Intervention
- Modeling
- Naturalistic Teaching Strategies
- Peer Training
- Pivotal Response Treatment
- Schedules
- Self Management
- Story Based Interventions
Data

- Data collection is important to help assess progress and evaluate programming and changes to programming.

- Examples
  - Frequency
  - Response rate
  - Time sampling
  - Duration
  - Latency
  - Correct/Incorrect
  - Level of prompting
  - Intensity

- Make data collection meaningful
  - No one wants to take data that isn’t going to be used!
  - No one wants to try to use data that isn’t accurate!
Antecedent Interventions
Antecedent Interventions

- How we modify the environment ahead of time to support learning and decrease likelihood of problem behaviors?

- This is where the majority of programming should occur!
Structured Classroom Schedule

- Instruction and programming are 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
  - How are you targeting? What data collecting?
- Down time is often equated with self stimulatory and other maladaptive behaviors
Individualized Goals

- Developmentally appropriate
- Assessment based
- Meaningful
- Data driven
- When will goals be worked on
  - Provide NUMEROUS learning opportunities
  - Teachable moments occur every moment of the day
Classroom Design

- Low student to adult ratio
- Structured and organized
- Distraction free teaching areas
- Visual supports/organizational aides
- Sensory items/modifications
- Communication tools readily accessible
- Motivating items visible but out of reach
- Multidisciplinary team consultation
Schedules

- Increases predictability
- Aids executive functioning
- Helps with transitioning
- Helps 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
Reinforcement

- Motivates learning!
- Use to establish, strengthen and maintain behaviors
- Identifying reinforcers– ongoing process
- Pair potential reinforcers with established reinforcers (including staff!)
- High frequency and immediate reinforcement early on
- Fade to more natural reinforcement
Teaching Technique Examples

- Time Delay Prompting
- Discrete Trial Teaching
- Priming
- Shaping
- Chaining
- Behavioral Momentum
- Group Instruction
  - Sequential Presentation
  - Choral Responding
- Modeling
- Imbedding Instruction
Resources

- A Work in Progress (Leaf & McEachin, 1999)
- Behavioral Intervention for Young Children with Autism: A Manual for Parents and Professionals (Maurice, Greene & Luce, 1996)
- It’s Time for School! Building Quality ABA Educational Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Leaf, Taubman, McEachin, 2008)
- SKILLS (CARD, 2012)
- The Verbal Behavior Approach: How to Teach Children with Autism and Related Disorders (Barbera & Rasmussen, 2007)
- Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (Sundberg, 2008)
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