Understanding Autism
Professional Development Curriculum:
Strategies for Classroom Success and
Effective Use of Teacher Supports
What is ASD?

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder that impacts the way individuals communicate and interpret their environment, often resulting in challenges with social interactions and processing information.
DSM-5 ASD Criteria

- Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across contexts
- Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities
  - Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements,
  - Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns or verbal nonverbal behavior
  - Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
  - Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interests
- Symptoms must be present in early childhood
- Symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning
Strategies for Classroom Success
Secondary school environments can be challenging for students with ASD

- **Transitions**
  - Require multiple changes
  - Predictable and yet still unpredictable

- **Sights and sounds of hallways**
  - Noise and commotion can be overwhelming
  - After navigating the hallways, students are often stressed and unsettled

- **Students with ASD often have difficulty:**
  - Picking out important information from the environment
  - Understanding what they are supposed to do
Think About This…

‣ What are the aspects of your school that may make it a challenging environment for students with ASD?
‣ Write down 5 examples
‣ Share with a colleague

Please refer to exercise #1 on the corresponding handout.
How can you support students with ASD in your classroom and school?
Objectives

By the end of the session, you will be able to:

- Identify and use elements of classroom structure that will assist most students, including those with and without autism
- Find ways to incorporate 5 key student supports into your classroom
- Identify supports available to help you brainstorm, solve problems, and plan
Structure is Key!

- Make information accessible
  - Spell out where homework goes and where to get materials for the day
- Provide structure
  - Make task expectations clear
- Create a predictable classroom
Classroom Supports

CLICK HERE to View Video Clip – Segment Two: Integrating Supports in the Classroom
Hypersensitivities

CLICK HERE to View Video Clip – Segment Two: Integrating Supports in the Classroom
Consider potential auditory and visual challenges

- **Example challenges:**
  - Sitting too close to:
    - Windows
    - Hallway door
    - Specific students
  - Radio playing
  - Messages flickering on TV screen
  - Fluorescent lights
Try This...

- Describe two supports that you noticed in the classroom you just observed:
  1. 
  2. 

- Identify 2-3 elements of a well-structured classroom you have in place or would like to add:
  1. 
  2. 
  3.

Please refer to exercise #2 on the corresponding handout.
5 Key Support Strategies

- Priming
- Academic Modifications
- Visual Supports
- Reinforcement
- Home Base
Priming

- What is priming?
  - Priming is exposure to academic course material or tasks before instruction

- Why should you use this strategy?
  - It gives students the chance to become familiar with the material or skills, and increases the likelihood they will learn and use key concepts

- Priming is most effective when it is built into the student’s daily routine
What does priming look like?

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What does priming look like?

- What is a healthy storm vs. an unhealthy storm?
- Why is the isotherm steeper higher up?
- So is an area of high pressure most commonly associated with warm air? And because in the south? And if so does that mean most of the transfer of air between high a
Academic Modifications

‣ What are academic modifications?
  • When the content or format of assignments are adapted to meet the student’s specific needs

‣ Examples:
  • Read directions out loud
  • Extended time on assignments

‣ IEP at a glance/cheat sheet can be useful to communicate academic modifications
Examples of Academic Modifications

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At My School…

- How do I know if my student needs academic modifications?
- Who do I ask?
- Where are student Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)?
- Where in an IEP do I find information on academic modifications?

Please refer to the handout, “At My School” that corresponds with this exercise.
Visual Supports

What are visual supports?
- Visual supports are any tool presented visually that supports an individual as he or she moves through the day.

Visual supports might include:
- Pictures
- Written words
- Objects within the environment
- Visual boundaries
- Schedules
- Maps
- Labels
- Organization systems
- Timelines
- Scripts
Visual Supports for All Students

- Provide study guides that highlight the main points of the lesson
- Highlight key parts of the text

Highlighted text tells students when to stop reading and begin working on comprehension questions.
Visual supports can also take the form of:

- **Self-management tools** that help the student stay focused and understand their behavior
- **Graphic organizers** that help the student highlight important information
- **Social scripts** that help the student understand what to say or how to act in particular situations
Self-Management

- I have remembered to include a clear and lively opening.
- I have included a suitable problem.
- I have created a balanced ending to my story.
- I have used capital letters at the start of my sentences and for people’s names.
- I remembered to put full stops at the end of my sentences.
- I have included what the character would see, hear, smell, feel and taste
### Graphic Organizers

**Diagram:**

- **Main Idea:**
- **Detail:**

**Table:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. During Class:</td>
<td>Take notes here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. After Class:</td>
<td>Edit and summarize here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Later:</td>
<td>Your ideas, thoughts, questions here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Visual for Social Script

Looking While Listening

When someone is talking to me, I try to listen. This is a very nice thing to do.

There are a lot of times that I have to be a good listener.

If I look at the ceiling and other things in the room, the other person may not know I am listening.

This is what you need to do next.
Visuals help everyone learn!

From The Far Side by Gary Larson
What do visual supports look like?

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Choose a Support to Think About

PRIMING

VISUAL SUPPORTS
Think About This…

Choose one of the following exercises (#3 or #4) to complete:

- What could priming look like for your student?
- Who could provide this support?
  - A paraprofessional?
  - A parent?
  - A peer?
- When can you build this into the student’s schedule?

- What visual supports do you provide to all the students in your class?
- What other visual supports could you provide that might benefit the whole class?
- What student-specific visual supports could you provide?

Please refer to exercise #3 on the corresponding handout.

Please refer to exercise #4 on the corresponding handout.
Reinforcement

‣ What is reinforcement?
  • Reinforcement rewards students for behaving in ways that are productive and support their continued growth

‣ Examples of reinforcement:
  • Verbal praise
  • Computer time
  • Homework pass

Remember: A teenager with ASD may need to be reinforced for things that others do not need to be reinforced.
What does reinforcement look like?

CLICK HERE to View Video Clip – Segment Two: Integrating Supports in the Classroom
Home Base

- What is home base?
  - Home base is a designated place where students with ASD can go to regain control during times of stress.
Choose a Support to Think About

REINFORCEMENT

HOME BASE
Think About This…

Choose one of the following exercises (#5 or #6) to complete:

- Brainstorm ways to provide reinforcement to:
  - Your class
  - Specific students

- Where would be a good “home base” for your students? Why?

Please refer to exercise #5 on the corresponding handout.

Please refer to exercise #6 on the corresponding handout.
More Supports

› These five support strategies can help teachers provide the structure that students with ASD need to learn effectively

› For other evidence-based practices for students with ASD, visit:
  http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/evidence-based-practices

› For case studies describing the use of these practices with secondary school students with ASD, visit:
  http://cresa.fpg.unc.edu/resources
Effective Use of Teacher Supports
Where can you turn?

Three primary supports can enhance your efforts when working with students with ASD:

- The Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Special Education teachers
- Paraprofessionals

If you feel your student needs supports…

- Identify your school’s key contact for beginning process of acquiring additional supports
Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Goal Description

Given a topic, Luke will write a well formulated paragraph, with a topic sentence, two or more supporting sentences, and closure statement, with 80% accuracy.

Does the student require assistive technology devices and/or services? No

If yes, describe needs:

(Address after determination of related services.) Is this goal integrated with related service(s)? No

* If yes, list the related service area(s) of integration:

Benchmarks or Short Term Objectives (if applicable)
(Required for students participating in the state alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards)

1. Luke will write two topic sentences, with correct capitalization, and correct punctuation, with 85% accuracy.

2. Luke will write a response paragraph to teacher directed questioning assessment in his general education classes, with 85% accuracy.

Describe how progress toward the annual goal will be measured

Teacher made tests; Report card in Writing Intense Courses (English/Social Studies)
The IEP is the central document that serves as the student’s roadmap to education. It lays out student’s present skills and skills that teachers should work with the student to improve, including academic and non-academic goals. It structures the learning process for students with ASD and other special needs to ensure they are reaching their full potential.
At My School…

- Review the following on the “At My School” Worksheet
  - Where are the IEPs located?
  - Do general education teachers need to access the full IEP, or is there a summative form (“IEP at a glance / cheat sheet) provided?
  - Where can general education teachers find strategies that have worked in the past for a particular student?

Please refer to the handout, “At My School” that corresponds with this exercise.
Special Education Teachers
Special Education Teachers

- The special education teacher is the guide to the student’s disability and IEP
- Special education teachers help monitor the IEP to make sure the student is making progress. If the student is not making progress, they can think of alternative ways to help the student make progress.
Paraprofessionals

- Paraprofessionals are not often present in general education classrooms
- When they are:
  - Paraprofessionals help keep students with ASD focused on the classroom teacher and provide reinforcement when they are paying attention
  - Paraprofessionals can make sure the student:
    - Is on task
    - Has materials
    - Has necessary supports
- Paraprofessionals are NOT responsible for developing curriculum content
At My School…

- Review the following on the “At My School” Worksheet:
  - What role do special educators play in helping students with ASD in the general education classroom?
  - What information do special educators provide general educators about their students with ASD?
  - When are special educators available to meet with general educators to brainstorm ideas?
  - What role do paraprofessionals play in general education classrooms?
  - What other supports are available to me?

Please refer to the handout, “At My School” that corresponds with this exercise.
Conclusion

- The learning environment that secondary teachers create and the specialized supports they provide are integral to the success of students with ASD.
Resources

- Center on Secondary Education for Students with ASD - http://cseas.fpg.unc.edu/


- National Professional Development Center on ASD - http://autismmpdc.fpg.unc.edu/

Credits

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