Covering the Spectrum

Current Trends in the Delivery of Services to Students with Autism

Presented at the meeting of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative
San Diego
May 2013
Why are students with autism considered so challenging, so special?

- Communication and language
- Interpersonal socialization
- Stereotyped behavior and routines
- Self-regulation
- Executive dysfunction
- Concrete literal thinking
- Processing issues
- Sensory issues
Comparison of DSM-IV and V

**DSM-IV**

- Autistic Disorder
- Asperger’s Disorder
- PDD-NOS

- Fewer behaviors required under Fixated & Repetitive Behavior

- Communication and Social Interaction domains separate

- Delay in language development required

**DSM-V**

- Umbrella diagnosis: Autism Spectrum Disorder with severity levels (1,2,3)

- More behaviors needed in Fixated and Repetitive Behavior

- Social/Communication Deficits combined

- Delay in language development not required

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Prevalence Data

- Official government estimate remains at 1 in 88, but additional data suggest that the true incidence of autism is higher.

- Estimates from survey conducted by Autism Speaks were closer to the 1 in 50 figure.
ASD Prevalence and staffing

Will the numbers keep growing?

How will rates be impacted by DSM-V?

How has increase in ASD affected school staffing?

What kinds of staff development programs are necessary?

What kinds of support/mentoring programs are helpful?
National Development Center on ASD in North Carolina combined principles of implementation science, evidence-based practices, and program evaluation to apply effective intervention practice at the school level.

Implementation Science

1. High quality materials that describe practices
2. Early and joint planning by team members
3. Availability of adequate technical support
4. Assessment of implementation readiness
5. Unique contextual variables (capacity building)
6. Bi-directional approach (top-down and bottom-up)
One reason for increased numbers of children diagnosed with ASD is movement between categories.

Educational classification may change from one category to another over time because of differences in assessment practices and diagnostic criteria.
Disproportionality in Autism

- Differences among groups have been observed in studies –

- Studies have reported various rates of disproportionality and a multitude of possible reasons.

- One year there was over-representation of African American children, but more years showed an under-representation.
Disproportionality

- Studies have shown that, in some states, African American children are being diagnosed later than White children.

- This is an important point because children may miss the benefits of early intervention.
Disproportionality

- Hispanic and American Indian children underrepresented.
- White students twice as likely to be identified with autism as Hispanic and American Indian/Alaskan Native students.
- Although initially overrepresented, the odds ratios for Asian/Pacific Islander and Black students with autism continuously declined in recent years.
- Hispanic and American Indian/Alaskan Native students significantly underrepresented every year in the analysis (Travers, Tincani, & Krezmien, 2011).
Collaboration for Enhancement of Outcomes

Partnerships improve outcomes and leverage resources:

- What types of intra- and interagency collaboration should school administrators be fostering?

- Family involvement and support networks
Partnerships

- Community Autism Advisory Committee
- University partnerships
- U.S. Department of Education training and research grants
- Comer School Development Program
Commonly employed approaches

- ABA
- DIR
- TEACCH
**Applied Behavior Analysis**

- **Applied Behavior Analysis** is the science of human behavior.

- ABA = arranging the environment to increase the likelihood of success (emission of a desired response)
There is an abundance of research studies demonstrating the effectiveness of ABA as an intervention for individuals with autism.

These studies range from classic group design studies to single subject studies supporting the use of one specific intervention or technique.

In short, ABA works!
ABA

• ABA is based on principles of learning.

• ABA employs contingent use of reinforcement to increase behaviors, generalize learned behaviors and reduce maladaptive behaviors.
ABA

- Under the umbrella of ABA, different teaching strategies, such as shaping and chaining behaviors may be used.

- ABA is far wider and broader than merely discrete trial training.
TEACCH is a special education program developed by Eric Schopler and colleagues at the University of North Carolina in the early 1970s. Today this method is used by schools across the U.S.
TEACCH employs an approach called Structured Teaching, which emphasizes a highly structured and predictable classroom environment and the use of visual learning.
The TEACCH approach is based on a respect for the culture of autism, which embraces a philosophy that people with autism have characteristics that affect how they learn.
• TEACCH classrooms have designated areas for tasks such as individual work, group activities and play.

• Teachers use visual supports to help students transition between activities.
The Developmental, Individual Differences, Relationship-based Approach (DIR) = comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach developed by Drs. Stanley Greenspan and Serena Wieder.
• DIR utilizes an intensive integrated intervention which is individualized to match the child’s level in the social-interaction development hierarchy.
Relationship-based developmental experiences help to skills in the core processes of relating, attending, communicating, and thinking.
Floortime consists of reciprocal child-directed interactions resulting in communication circles. The goal of floortime is to engage the child by increasing the circles of communication.
Increasing instructional efficacy: Bringing approaches together

Integrated Behavioral Experiential Teaching

IBET
What’s different about IBET?

- IBET Integrates subject matter - reading, writing, problem solving
- Does not require intact auditory perceptual skills
- Utilizes the student’s own experiences as the basis for instruction
- Students proceed at their own rate
VAKT

Research that holds up--

- Visual
- Auditory
- Tactile
- Kinesthetic
Staff Development

Criteria for effective staff development:

1. Inclusion of school and community
2. Initial staff input and buy-in
3. Ongoing training workshops and school visits
4. Regular evaluation with responsiveness to input
5. Gradual change, with observable benefits, more sustainable
6. Involvement in professional organizations
Fluid integration of Developmental Options

Early Years
- Young children
- Early Intervention

Classroom Learning
- Early Elementary
- Mid-Elementary

Longitudinal Planning
- Middle School
- Secondary School

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Matching learner, setting, & goals

- Where do we educate children with ASD?
- How do we educate children with ASD?
- What are the critical questions?
Is more better?

• Efficacious service means building capacity, leveraging resources, and collaborating among disciplines.

• What variables can we control that influence student outcomes?

• The transdisciplinary model = knowledge sharing, streamlined learning and development, leadership opportunities and accountability
Some Commonly Employed Diagnostic Tools

- Autism Diagnostic Interview – ADI-R
- Childhood Autism Rating Scale – CARS-2
- Autism Screening Instrument for Educational Planning – ASIEP 3
- Gilliam Autism Rating Scale – GARS 3
Culturally Sensitive Assessment

- Recruit and train psychologists from traditionally underrepresented groups.
- Reach young children in high poverty communities so that intervention can begin in the critical years.
Racially diverse students may be underrepresented because of:

- limited access to quality early health
- need for improved early screening
- Insensitivity of screening instruments
- Lack of professional development in culturally sensitive assessment
Problems with diagnostic rating scales/checklists

- Heterogeneity of population – wide range of ability and behavior

- Change occurs with growth - developmental gains with age

- Based on deviance model – difficulty finding appropriate comparison groups
Administrators’ role in supporting staff to improve outcomes for students with ASD

- Provide staff development in integrated evidence-based practices
- Provide teacher mentoring programs
- Increase amount of teaching time in the community
- Increase family involvement and activities
- Place a heavier emphasis on coordinated transition programming
Underlying principles in service provision for students with ASD

- If you know one person with autism, you know only one person with autism.
- Active, meaningful and gratifying inclusion in school and community is an inherent right.
- If you believe in only one approach, you may be depriving students of their right to the best-fit approach for them.
- Program provision is fluid and changes as the student develops.
For further information

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