AUTISM IN THE CLASSROOM

Sponsored by: Autism Society of Georgia

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Overview

• Brief History
• Inclusion
• Disruptive Behaviors
• Intervention Strategies
Brief History

- 1960s-1970s
  - Special Day Schools, Punishment

- 1975
  - Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA)

- Late 1970s-1980s
  - Field of PBS

- 1990s
  - IDEA

- 2000s
  - Greater awareness, and bigger push for Inclusion
Inclusion

Benefits

• Child’s right to be included in the LRE, which is the general education classroom
• Academic performance
• Social development
• Model peers who exhibit appropriate behaviors
• NO negative impact on students without disabilities

Disadvantages

• NONE
Disruptive Behaviors

• Most disruptive behaviors have a communicative function
  • The student is trying to say something but is unable to appropriately verbalize it
• Disruptive behaviors are NOT unique to autism
• Disruptive behaviors occur because they are **effective and efficient**
• Disruptive behaviors continue to occur because it is most likely inadvertently reinforced
• Can treat disruptive behaviors using positive behavioral strategies and **NOT** punishment approaches
Intervention Strategies

• Motivational package – PRT
• Buddy System
• Priming
• Schedules
• Preferential Seating
• Physical Exercise
• Self-management/Token Economy
• Coordination Across Environments
Motivational Package – PRT

• **Child Choice**
  • Child has input; activities chosen by child

• **Embed Natural Reinforcers**
  • Reinforcement is directly related to the item

• **Intersperse Maintenance and Acquisition tasks**
  • Easy tasks are mixed with more difficult activities

• **Reinforce Attempts**
  • Reasonable and intended attempts are reinforced

• **Task Variation**
  • Various tasks/activities are presented
Buddy System

• When students are encouraged to find a “buddy” to work with
  • During academic time
  • Transitional periods

• Benefits include:
  • Increased pro-social behavior
  • Increased on-task behavior
  • Decreased disruptive behavior
Priming

• A procedure wherein the child is exposed to the academic materials or activities in advance

• Benefits include:
  • Reduced avoidance and escape behaviors
  • Improved on-task responding
  • Improved socialization
  • Improved initiations
  • Improved overall behavior
Schedules

• Use a visual schedule to make activities predictable
  • Pictures
  • Words

• This makes activities predictable. Even changes in routines can be incorporated
Preferential Seating

• Arrange specific seating locations for students
  • Near the front of the classroom
  • Toward the side if aide support is needed
  • Near a competent peer
    • Peer assistance
    • Peer modeling
Physical Exercise

• Incorporate vigorous exercise into the school day (e.g., recess, lunch-recess, PE)

• Benefits include:
  • Increased on-task behavior
  • Improved academics
  • Decreased interfering behaviors
    • Repetitive behaviors
    • Disruptive behaviors
Self-Management/Token Economy

- System for rewarding the student for exhibiting/engaging in appropriate behaviors

- **Self-management**: student tracks his/her own behavior
- **Token Economy**: teacher rewards student with a tangible item (e.g., stickers) each time student exhibits the target behavior

- Few examples for when to implement self-management/token economy
  - Staying on-task
  - Staying in seat
  - Smooth transitions from activity to activity
  - Raising hand to ask/answer a question
  - Making appropriate comments
  - Etc…
Coordination Across Environments

- Coordinate consistent approaches across environments
  - Parents/guardians
  - Home behavioral therapists
  - Babysitters

- Behavioral Contrast
- Extinction Burst
Summary

• Students with autism can be successfully included in their general education classes
  • It is their right to be included!
  • They may need appropriate support to be successful in the general education classroom

• These strategies have strong empirical support
  • It works and is supported by research
Thank You!

- UCSB Koegel Autism Center
- Pivotal Response Treatment