Teaching, Supporting & Including Students on the Autism Spectrum

Session III:
“You’re Going to Love This Kid”
Educating Students on the Spectrum in the Inclusive Classroom

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Jay refuses to...
Jay won’t...
Jay doesn’t...
Jay can’t...

Habits of Mind
see inclusion is a process

• over, under, around or through
• find a way—or make a way!

‘20 Ways’ lists: a practical way to understand inclusion as a process

seek benefits for all
Math Achievement of River View Students  
(Theoharis & Theoharis, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ Current Grade Level</th>
<th>Percent Scoring at or Above Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before inclusive options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 5th graders</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 5th graders with disabilities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 6th graders</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 6th graders with disabilities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 7th graders</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 7th graders with disabilities</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 8th graders</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th graders with disabilities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. These data reflect the same student cohorts over three years. Data shown are for students with disabilities who entered each grade cohort two years prior to their current grade level (for example, data from 3rd grade for students listed as current 5th grade). River View also made gains at each grade level from year to year (for example, comparing one 5th grade class to the next 5th grade class).
teach up

- expect more, get more
- talk to those who get results
- share stories of competence

Kurth & Mastergeorge (2010)
ACADEMIC AND COGNITIVE PROFILES OF STUDENTS WITH AUTISM: IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE AND PLACEMENT
International Journal of Special Education, 25 (2)

- examined academic profiles of adolescents with autism educated in two different settings: inclusive and self-contained
- compared using three measures—cognitive assessments, adaptive behavior, and academic achievement
- found significant between group differences in academic achievement measures
- Students included in general education obtained significantly higher scores on tests of achievement, including subtests measuring abstract and inferential skills


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>letter-word</th>
<th>reading fluency</th>
<th>reading comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>included</td>
<td>86.9*</td>
<td>79.3*</td>
<td>68.1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not included</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .15; Large Effect Size
5 Strategies for Classroom Success

1. get it off the page

- the learning state needs to change often
- helps students practice communication & social skills
- even small opportunities can make a difference (passing time, breaks at the desk)

brain breaks

- jumping jacks
- walk & talk
- 3-step handshake
- ball toss (e.g., metaphors)
- modified countdown
- active voting (e.g., stand if you think the answer is X)
- rock, paper, scissors
- do the wave (e.g., fast, slow, regular)
- YMCA
- stretching
- charades (can be content-based)
- quiet ball

- short mental and physical breaks taken at regular intervals during instruction (every 12-20 minutes)
- used to help students arrive at a more optimal learning state or to make them "available" for instruction.
- usually do not hold content
- typically < than 5 minutes
Many people with autism are visual thinkers. I think in pictures. I do not think in language. All my thoughts are like videotapes running in my imagination. Pictures are my first language, and words are my second language. - Temple Grandin
information/preview

communication

checklists/directions
rules

• teach skills in the context of daily instruction (e.g., giving compliments in peer editing, active listening during collaborative group work)
• create products that help students learn & remember

social needs

3. teach social skills
Normal people seem to learn certain stock questions and utter them to fill a conversational void. For example, when meeting someone they have not seen in a while, they say things like:

“How’s your wife?”
“How’s your son?”
“You’re looking good-did you lose weight?”

Normal people will emit statements like this in the absence of any provocation, or any visual indication that there may have been a change in the wife or son or the weight. Some people I’ve observed appear to have dozens of these stock questions at their command and I have never been able to figure out how they choose a particular phrase for emission at any given moment. (2007, pp. 192–193)

social secrets (Kluth, 2011)

• For many learners with autism, participating in a social interaction is like playing a game without knowing the rules or the objectives.

• Students report that they often feel as if everyone else knows the social secrets necessary for success and they do not.

• We need to teach them the secrets & find ways to help them internalize the information.
“social secret” examples

• It isn’t nice to call the teacher names. You may get in trouble for it.
• When people say “How are you?” in the hallway, they don’t usually expect a long answer. You might say, “fine” or “hanging in there”.
• If you need a break, you can say, “May I use the bathroom?” You can do this even if you don’t need to use the bathroom.

social skill slam book (Kluth, 2013)

social narratives

• Identify the target behavior and the social situation(s), setting(s), or context in which the behavior should occur.
• Write the social narrative, keeping in mind that the length, wording, and format should be appropriate for the student’s age and abilities.
• Add relevant visuals to support the narrative, such as pictures, photos, or drawings.
• Read the narrative to the student, demonstrate the target behavior, and role-play with the student, if possible.
• Find opportunities to share the narrative often—perhaps by creating laminated cards, by reading it as part of a routine, by offering it on audio, etc.
• Make modifications to the story as needed to improve its effectiveness (e.g., more/fewer words; additional images).
Sometimes when I come to school my teacher may not be in the classroom when I get there. She might be sick or at a meeting. Someone else will be sitting at her desk. This is okay because he/she is a substitute teacher. A substitute teacher will be doing the job of my regular teacher. My teacher has left a note for the substitute teacher so he/she knows what to do. The substitute teacher might do things differently than Ms. Dekyser. That’s okay. The substitute teacher will help me learn just like Ms. Dekyser does.

I can help the substitute teacher by following all our classroom rules. I will raise my hand when I have a question. I will stay in my seat and do my work. I will listen when the substitute teacher is teaching. I will treat him/her just like I treat Ms. Dekyser. This will please Ms. Soderberg when she comes back to school because all my work will be done.

power cards

- The power card strategy involves including special interests with visual aids to teach and reinforce skills (e.g., academic, behavioral).
- Power cards can be used when an individual lacks the understanding of expectations, to clarify choices, to teach cause and effect between a behavior and its consequence, to teach another’s perspective, to aid in generalization, or to serve as a visual reminder of expectations of a situation.

elements:

- A brief script about the special interest and target behavior.
- The power card is the size of an index card and includes a small picture of the special interest and the solution to the problem situation broken into three to five steps (summary of the script).
More examples of Power Cards (E. Gagnon)

Power Cards

TPT: good resource for free & low cost social support tools

4. turn to the experts

Consult creatively with families & students:

- use video
- use a new problem-solving strategy
- involve the student
- create products (think prevention)
- take collaborative data

Dear Ms. Van Restel & Ms. Then and others,

I would like to be in Chess Club and Chess Scholars. I would also like to propose a Chess Challenge Group for after school (see me for more on this). I don’t like going to Spanish because the room is really hot. That needs an adjustment.

Can we find a way to get more “Ozie” things into the day?

—Rocco
5. find a safe space  
(prevention not punishment)

• study area
• alternative space (hallway)
• another room if needed

This content from this workshop comes primarily from these three resources:

www.differentiationdaily.com
www.paulakluth.com