# Teaching Play to Young Children with ASD

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N E B R A S K A
**autism spectrum disorders**
N E T W O R K

The contents of this power point presentation were developed under a grant from the Nebraska Department of Educaton, IDEA parts B and C from the U.S. Department of Education. However, this content does not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

## The ASD Network

A Statewide Plan of the Nebraska Department of Education for providing support to school districts and parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

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## Goal

The goal of the ASD Network is to provide support to local school districts and families of children with ASDs in order to build the capacity of local school districts in providing a free, appropriate public education based on the needs of each student with ASD.

# Today's Agenda

- Why Play is Difficult for Children with ASD
- Getting Started: Teaching Play
  - Structure
  - Reinforcement
- Using imitation to teach simple object based play
- Teaching expanded play
- Generalization: Structuring play for the natural environment

# PLAY…THE WHY'S

Why is it difficult? Why is it important?

## Why is Play Difficult for Children with ASD?

- Social, Communication and Imitation deficits have a huge impact on a child with Autism's ability to play
- It is often easier for children with Autism to learn static/rote skills such as colors, shapes, numbers and letters
- Activities based on these rote skills are often preferred by children with Autism
- Children with ASD have a need for sameness which is evident in their use of toys in rigid and set patterns-- this may result in a need to take control of their environment
- Children with ASD may have limited interest in objects and toys and may not spontaneously experiment or explore toys

Eckenrode, Hearsey, Fennell, Reynolds, 2009

## Why is Play Difficult for Children with ASD?

- Many thinking skills are necessary for elaborate play (planning ahead, organizing steps, gathering toys and props, and thinking imaginatively etc.)

- All are often difficult for children with ASD

Eckenrode, Hearsey, Fennell, Reynolds, 2009

- Play is THE Vehicle to develop both
  – Cognitive Skills (learn from other children)
  – Problem Solving Skills(negotiate and be flexible)

Emily Iland, Inc. 2011

# TEACHING PLAY

**Where do we start??**

# FIRST STEPS TO TEACH PLAY

## Play Starts with Baby Steps…
## Task Analysis

- Systematically breaking a play/social activity into it's component parts so that it is no longer a jumble of language, objects and actions that may have little meaning for our child with Autism
- Teaching the activity in small parts gives the child's brain a chance to process all the incoming information and give meaning to each action

Julia Moor; 2002

## Breaking it Down…Making Play Easy

- Think of a simple play activity as a series of tasks/steps
- List the tasks/steps you can do with a specific play activity
- It is often helpful to watch other children playing with the activity and document everything they do with the toy

# Examples of Play Task Analysis…

Play Food- Kitchen: Each item can then be broken down even more..

"Eat" play food
"Pour" tea (coffee)
Put food on plates
Set Table
"Eat" with silverware
Cut food
Cook on Stove (stir food)
Cook in microwave
Give food/plate
Wash dishes
Put dishes away
Put food in frig
Wipe table

# Little People Playground….

- Put girl in swing
- Push girl on swing
- Put girl on slide
- Push down slide
- Put boy and girl in merry – go-round
- Spin merry-go-round
- Walk boy through the tunnel
- Put girl in airplane bouncer

## Assessing Target Skils

- What toys are in your classroom?
- What toys are other student playing with?
- What is your student interested in- -or gravitates toward?
- What context controlled responses can you build on?
- Imitation assessments in ABLLS-R and VB-Mapp

## Be thoughtful when selecting targets….

- Place block in bucket (CCR)
- Ring bells (CCR)
- Push/drive toy truck
- Walk animal
- Feed doll
- Roll play-doh
- Bang toy hammer (CCR)
- Stir food

- Stack blocks
- Put hat on head
- Put animal in truck
- Pound play-doh (CCR)
- Play Drum (CCR)
- Kiss Baby
- Drive car (with round container lid)

# NEXT STEP...CULTIVATING MOTIVATION

**No Reinforcer...No lesson!!**

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# Identifying Reinforcers

- Play is WORK for children with Autism
- Reinforcement is what increases behavior
- Motivate the child to learn new skills by using preferred reinforcers

# Reinforcement

- **Observation**—What does the student do during free play or leisure time

- **Preference checklist**—Current or past teachers, parents

- **Formal Choice** Assessment—Systematically determine positive reinforcement (R$^+$)

- Favorite foods/drinks
- Preferred objects/toys
- Preferred activities (comfort zone activities/movement activities, goofy reinforcers, music/songs, i-pad)
- Escape/Break Time (Be CAREFUL)
- Using Special Interests….Toy Appeal

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# Making Motivation Work
# Create Toy Appeal Using Special Interests…

Know the child's special interests so you can utilize them with toys and activities!

Tasks Galore: Let's Play By: Eckenrode, Laurie:; Hearsey, Kathy; Fennell, Pat;  Reynolds,  Beth; 2009

# Examples…**Toy Appeal**



Tasks Galore: Let's Play By: Eckenrode, Laurie:; Hearsey, Kathy; Fennell, Pat; Reynolds, Beth; 2009

# Examples… **Toy Appeal**



Tasks Galore: Let's Play By: Eckenrode, Laurie:; Hearsey, Kathy; Fennell, Pat; Reynolds, Beth; 2009
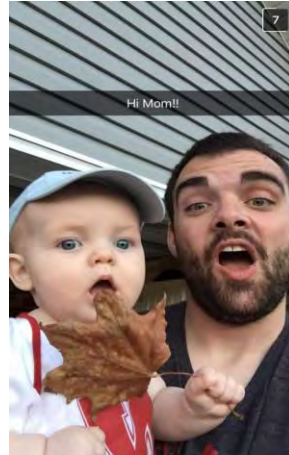
## BEFORE WE BEGIN TEACHING

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**You Need a Willing Learner…and a GREAT Teacher!**

Skills to Establish. . .

✓ Will stay near adults

✓ Will accept reinforcement from others

✓ Will engage in cooperative responding

✓ Will allow physical prompting for instruction

*You will only be able to establish these skills if conditions are motivating to your learner!

## Attend, Watch and Copy!



### USING IMITATION TO TEACH PLAY!!

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# Imitation…

- Imitation is typically acquired naturally
- Typically developing infants are born able to imitate
- By imitating babies build a catalogue of behaviors
- Social memory allows babies to repeat behavior again hours later



Hendrix, Zweber Palmer, Tarshis, Garcia Winner; 2013

## Imitation Skills and Typical Development

Imitation is a **pivotal** skill and SO IMPORTANT for…

- Learning novel motor skills
- Learning social skills
- Learning communication skills
- Learn from others – most importantly from peers
- **Acquire skills without direct teaching**

# TEACHING SIMPLE OBJECT BASED PLAY

# USING IMITATION TO TEACH EARLY PLAY

## Systematic Instruction:
## Teaching Object Based Play

- Instructional control-
  - Structured Learning Environment
  - Reinforcement
  - Task Demands – ALWAYS mix easy or known skills with target skills
- Target Skills-
  - start with about 4-5 simple one step play actions to teach
- Add "known"/"easy" skills
  - Context Controlled Response (CCR), motor imitation, receptive, echoic, etc.)
- Use Errorless Teaching- prompt before the error

# Errorless Teaching Sequence

- ***PROMPT  TRANSFER  DISTRACT  CHECK***

*\*\*\*For our young early learners who are struggling you might not be able to distract- - end trial with a lower level prompt!*
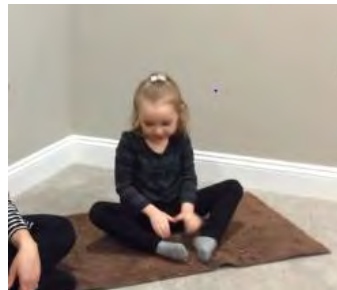
# Teaching Play Using Imitation

Best to use Identical sets of objects

Prompt:
    **Physical- Hand over hand**



Pay careful attention to the difficulty of imitation targets in that you don't increase level of difficulty to quickly!

## Errorless Teaching With Imitation
### (Copying Actions)

| Verbal Operant | Antecedent (Sd) | Behavior (Response) | Consequence (Consequence) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Imitation: Point to point correspondence on actions | Non-Verbal Stimulus (Person performs an action) | Non-Verbal Behavior: (Person imitates another's action) | Non-Specific Reinforcement (praise,i.e.) |

- **Object imitation is often easier than actions without an object**
- **Sd is usually "Do this" or "Copy me" or "Try this" and then model the response**
- **Errorless prompt is hand-over-hand**
- **Use specific praise in reinforcement**

## STEPS--Object Based Play Through Imitation…

Simple Procedure Steps:
- Gain the child's attention and give the instruction "do this" as you model the simple action with an object. Do NOT verbalize the instruction (i.e. "do this, shake")
- Remember: Errorless Teaching- **Prompt**-use a physical prompt (H-O-H)
- **Transfer** out prompt- model skills again with no prompt (or lesser prompt if necessary)
- **Distract**- use your known skill cards for 1-3 quick distracters
- **Check**—Model target skill again with no prompt or lesser prompt if necessary
- **Reinforce immediately!!**

Video Examples
One-Step Object
Play

# TEACHING EXPANDED PLAY

Putting the steps together…

# Expanded Play

- Shape the simple actions your child is imitating into more conventional play sequences

- String 2 or more **mastered/*known skills*** together to create a play scheme

- Use your Mastered Skills List to determine what mastered skills can be put together to form a longer play scheme

- These skills are mastered so we should be able to use lower level prompts
  - Partial physical
  - Gestures/Pointing to help scaffold

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**Student:  Paige**

**Summary of Mastered Items**

**Mastered Play Skills**

| | Target | | Target |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Put in –Block in Bucket | 26 | "Weee" |
| 2 | Ring Bell | 27 | Feed Baby |
| 3 | Push Car/Truck | 28 | Tap/pound hammer |
| 4 | Walk Animal | 29 | Cow says "Moo" |
| 5 | "Zoom" | 30 | Put hat on head |
| 6 | Roll Playdoh | 31 | "Mmmmmm" |
| 7 | Duck Says "Quack" | 32 | Put gas in car (little garage) |
| 8 | Stir food | 33 | |
| 9 | Feed Baby | 34 | |
| 10 | Eat pretend food | 35 | |
| 11 | Ready St "Go" | 36 | |
| 12 | Pound playdoh | 37 | |
| 13 | Put hat on head | 38 | |
| 14 | Play drum | 39 | |
| 15 | Pour pretend drink | 40 | |
| 16 | Drive car (round steering wheel | 41 | |
| 17 | Roll car down ramp | 42 | |
| 18 | Push cookie cutter in play-doh | 43 | |
| 19 | Cover baby with blanket | 44 | |
| 20 | Put Food on plate | 45 | |
| 21 | Kiss baby | 46 | |
| 22 | Put hat on head | 47 | |
| 23 | Push car up ramp | 48 | |
| 24 | Put baby to bed | 49 | |
| 25 | Build tunnel with blocks (3) | 50 | |

# Video Examples
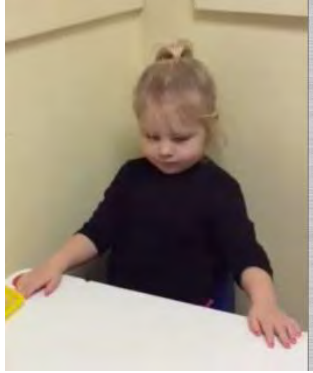
Scaffolding 3 Skills

Target 2 Skill Sequence

# Next Steps....Putting it All Together
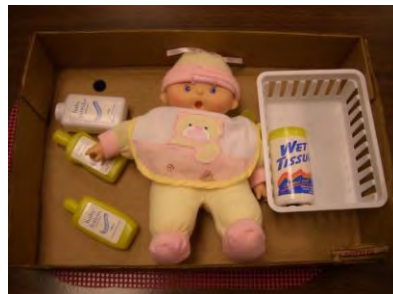
Video #1 Baby Play Scheme:

3 Steps: Feed the baby, cover the baby up and give the baby a kiss

**MOVING TOWARD GENERALIZATION IN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

**Structuring Tasks for Practice and Independence**

**SUPPORT GENERALIZATIONS IN PLAY CENTERS**

Using Visuals in the Natural Environment
Pretend Play: Flip Script

**One play step pictured on each page**

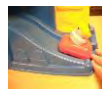**Play materials**

**Play House: Making Chicken**

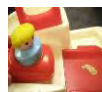**Visual "To Do" List. Child takes off Pictures and puts in "Finished" pocket**
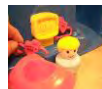


Garage Play Script

Person in car

↑ Ramp

↓ Ramp

Getting Gas

In Elevator ↑ and↓

# Questions?



# References…

- Tasks Galore: Let's Play By: Eckenrode, Laurie:; Hearsey, Kathy; Fennell, Pat; Reynolds, Beth; 2009
- Teaching Play Skills to Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder By: Smith, Melinda J, MD 2000
- The Incredible Flexible You By: Hendrix, Ryan; Zweber Palmer, Kari: Tarshis, Nancy; Garcia Winner, Michelle; 2013
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- Autism Spectrum Disorders and Play: Webinar by Emily D. Iland, M.A. 2011
- Zones of Regulation By: Leah Kuypers, 2011

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