



Thompson Center

For Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders

University of Missouri

Essential Classroom Components for Students with Autism

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The goal of this session

is to provide you with a **framework** for embedding essential classroom components.

Evidence-based strategies to increase independence, communication & social skills will be highlighted.

Unique Learning Challenges

Autism Spectrum Disorder

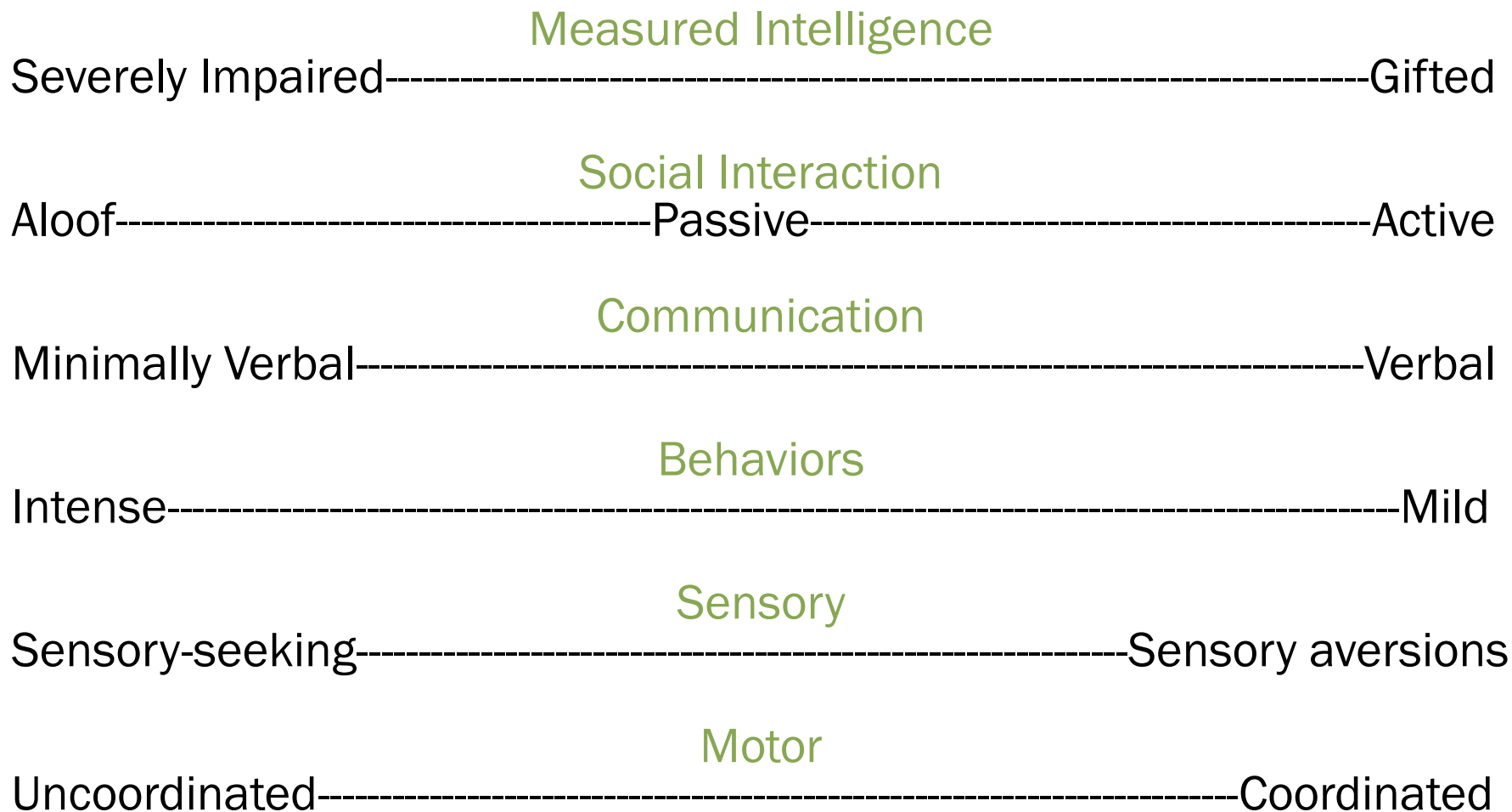


1 in 59 children

Two main domains where people with ASD show persistent deficits

1. Social communication and social interaction
2. Restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior

Defies Generalization



Challenges to Educating



- Communication
- Social Engagement
- Executive Functioning Deficits
&/or Intellectual Disability
- Behavioral Needs
- Adaptive Behavior Needs
- Sensory Differences
- Differing Vision Among Team
Members

Common Practice & Limitations



- Communication
- Social Engagement
- Executive Functioning Deficits or Intellectual Disability
- Behavioral Needs
- Adaptive Behavior Needs
- Sensory Differences
- Differing Vision Among Team Members

Common Practice

Reduced demands for the skill in the environment

- Adult anticipates needs & often initiates
- Adult does for

Limitation

Limited practice/lack of skill development

Best Practice Approach

- Increase opportunities
- **Teach** system can be independent with
- Reinforce skill acquisition & use

APERS

Autism Program Environment Rating Scale

Program Quality



Autism Program Environment Rating Scale (APERS)

- Created by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, University of North Carolina
- Research and applied use across the US
- Purpose is to provide focused and direct feedback for professional development about program quality for ASD
- Involves:
 - Direct observation
 - Interviews with several educators and at least one parent
 - Review of IEPs and evaluations of targeted students

Program Quality



APERS Domains

- Learning environments
- Positive learning climate
- Assessment and IEP Development
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Communication
- Social Competence
- Personal Independence and Competence
- Functional Approach to Behavior
- Family Involvement
- Teaming
- Transition

Domains associated with IDEA

Program Quality




APERS Domains

- Learning environments
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Domains associated with IDEA

Supporting Programming in Essential Areas



Framework for Approach

Embedding Essential Classroom Components



Consider every stage of the A-B-C Contingency

A

B

C

Do they have the
OPPORTUNITY
to use the skill?

Do they have the
TOOLS & SKILLS
to be successful?

Do they have
MOTIVATION
to use the skill?

Using this framework



Do they have the **OPPORTUNITY?**

Make changes to the environment

Make changes to the instruction

Change how you interact with the student

Do they have the **TOOLS & SKILLS?**

Identify Evidence Based Practices to Support

Identify visuals that can lead to increased independence

Do they have the **MOTIVATION?**

Reinforce!

Build from strengths & preferences

Essential Classroom Components for INDEPENDENCE



Increase

OPPORTUNITY

for Independence

Ask Yourself:



- Can _____ do this on his own?
- How can I teach _____ to do this more independently?
- Can _____ be supported without me? Teach the use of the resources around them.
 - Peer?
 - Visual support?
 - Non-intrusive prompt?
- Be aware of doing routine things for the individual
 - Always involve as much as possible & REINFORCE for involvement.
 - Use declarative statements to walk through concepts



Provide
TOOLS
Increase
SKILLS
for Independence

Visuals Supports



In the long term, visuals:

- *Increase overall independence*

In the short term, visuals:

- Decrease the need for verbal redirection
- Decrease the need for prompting
- Decrease anxiety in certain situations, therefore
 - Decrease behavior
 - Increase engagement

Understand Impact of Prompting



Be aware of the level of prompting and support provided to individuals:

- Latency (wait time)
- Intonation
- Explanation
- Verbal
- Visual
- Positional
- Pointing
- Gestures
- Modeling
- Physical

Least Intrusive



Most Intrusive

Teach Problem Solving



1. Look around and see if you can figure it out.
2. Find a peer/community member to ask
3. Find a person of authority to ask (Mom, Teacher, Personnel working in the store, etc.)

Teach to Follow Multiple-Step Directions



- Present in 3's (First – Next – Last)
 - Use “Dora the Explorer” Language
- Provide a visual / List
- Teach to create own list

Evidence Based Practices for Independence



- Task Analysis
- Structured Work Systems
- Video Modeling
- Self-Management
- Visuals



Increase

MOTIVATION

for Independence

Reinforce!!!



- **Should be based on individual preferences of the student**
- If progress is slow or inconsistent, it is often an issue of reinforcement
 - Often reinforcement is faded too quickly and the adults want to rely on intrinsic rewards for doing well
- Just because you get better at something does not mean you should be reinforced less

Essential Classroom Components for COMMUNICATION



Increase

OPPORTUNITY

for Communication

Increase opportunities for students to **RESPOND**



- Gain the student's attention before providing them the opportunity to respond
- Provide clear choices between 2 things
 - Increases opportunities for communication
 - For emergent language learners, provides a language model

Increase opportunities for students to **INITIATE**



- Withhold materials – (Refrain from saying: “What do you need?”)
- Offer a small amount to get them to request “more” of the item
- Teach how to appropriately protest
- Give some parts of the materials, but not all
- **Sabotage** the routine

Opportunities Matrix



Time of day/ Activity	Target Skills				
	<i>Collaborating with groups</i>	<i>Starting conversations</i>			
Hallways		Give topic starters Practice basic greeting before walking to class together			
Social Studies	Prime for group compromising During group, use gesture cues				
Lunch		Give topic starters Prime for asking to sit with a group			
Science	Prime for taking turns with lab ideas				



Provide
TOOLS
Increase
SKILLS
for Communication

Considerations for Emergent Language Learners



- Introduce Augmented Alternative Communication (AAC) EARLY
- Consider priority for the activity: Independence v. Communication
- Plan for systematic communication across the day

Considerations for Students with Established Communication



- Even for children with high levels of verbal language-consider visual supports and other methods to cue communication skills





Evidence Based Practices for Communication

- Peer Mediation
- Functional Communication Training (FCT)
- Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)
- Social Skills Groups
 - SCI Curriculum
- Direct Instruction using Cognitive Behavior Intervention (CBI)



Increase
MOTIVATION
for Communication

Motivate children to communicate



- Build communication opportunities around areas of interest
- Reinforce attempts at communication not just perfect communication

Reinforce Attempts



4 steps

1. Provide an opportunity for social-communication
2. Reinforce “reasonable attempt” at social communication
 - Acknowledge the attempt through “showing &/or telling”
 - Provide a small amount of what was requested
3. Request expanded social &/or language in response
4. Provide a higher level of reinforcement!!!

Essential Classroom Components for SOCIAL COMPETENCE



Increase
OPPORTUNITY
for Social Competence

Increase opportunities for students to socially engage



- Use shared materials
 - Assign a materials keeper
- Seat next to supportive peers
 - Provide seating embedded WITHIN the group (not behind the group or at the side)
- Provide peer prompting and peer training
- Build at least 1 opportunity within each time of day for all students to share with a peer &/or engage in cooperative work
 - Pairing the student with a paraeducator during these times is not acceptable



Increase Skills in Social Competence



- Teach to socially orient to others
- Teach socially appropriate behaviors
 - What may be considered “cute” or minor” when they are younger may not be acceptable when older



Evidence Based Practices for Social

- Peer Mediated Intervention (PMI)
- Social Skills Groups
 - SCI Curriculum
- Direct Instruction using Cognitive Behavior Intervention (CBI)
- Video Modeling

Considerations for Emergent Learners



- Foster relationships with peers in BOTH general education and in special education classrooms
- Instead of stopping interactions if inappropriate, help shape the behavior to an appropriate interaction

Considerations for Advanced Learners



- Assign peers for group work
- Embed “social skills” as “career skills” into academic lessons for the entire class to practice
 - Giving feedback, active listening, collaborating to share roles, etc.
- Tell the “why” in language can understand
 - Safe
 - Kind
- Label (privately) what you both are observing in others
 - Facial expressions
 - Tone and cadence of speech to interpret meaning
 - Discuss perspective taking



Increase
MOTIVATION
for Social Competence

Motivation for working on social skills



- Attempt to find clubs/venues for shared interests to work on social skills within
- Consider using reinforcement as its own social opportunity

Essential Classroom Components for TEAMING



Increase

OPPORTUNITY

for Teaming

IEP = Opportunity for Teaming



- Engage the student in the process as much as possible
 - Most of the time/work can be put in BEFORE the meeting
- Ask for input from ALL team members PRIOR to the meeting
- Be aware of body language
- Ask for input from silent participants at the meeting



Provide

TOOLS

Increase

SKILLS

For Teaming Success

Timelines & Best Practice Procedures for IEP Process

Suggested Timeline	Date Occurred	Action(s)
3 weeks from IEP meeting	_____ _____ _____	<p>Contact Parents to set up IEP</p> <p>Send Home IEP Packet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover Letter • Agency Checklist • Goal Priorities <p>Give IEP Team Members Goal Priority Sheet - with a deadline of 2 weeks prior to the meeting.</p>
2 weeks from the IEP meeting	_____ _____ _____	<p>Collect Goal Priority Sheets & draft goals based on evaluation information, past performance, and collective input on priority focus</p> <p>Complete Draft IEP</p> <p>Fill Out Release of Information for Agencies the Family is connected with to bring to the meeting</p>
1 week from IEP meeting	_____	<p>Send home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover letter • Draft PLAPP

IEP Meeting Date: _____

- ___ Introductions and Sign in
- ___ Give Parents Procedural Safeguards and Missouri Rights
- ___ Review with the parents the purpose of the meeting
- ___ Present Release of Information to have signed (and checklist of agency involvement if not returned by parents prior to the meeting)
- ___ Paraphrase the present level & ask the parents if they have any questions or would like for you to read the information
- ___ Project IEP on Smartboard (if possible) and make changes as the meeting occurs
- ___ Have a draft copy in front of the parents
- ___ Provide paper and a writing utensil for the parents to make notes

Dear _____ ,

In order to better prepare for your child's upcoming IEP meeting, please complete and return the attached goal priority survey and agency checklist as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Please check any agencies from which you receive services:

- Boone County Family Resources
- Thompson Center
- Alternative Community Training (ACT)
- Touch Point
- Burrell Behavioral Health
- Outside Occupational Therapist
- Outside Speech Language Therapist
- Boone County Hospital
- University of Missouri: _____ (please specify)
- Outside Psychological/Counseling Services
- Central Missouri Regional Office
- Services for independent Living
- Job Point
- MoreGroup
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Other:

Please list the therapies and leisure activities in which your child has been involved this year:

Please indicate if there are community agencies or services that you would like more information about:

Goal Priorities

In preparation for your child's upcoming IEP, we are requesting each member of the IEP team to complete this form. This information will help us to better focus our discussions and to consider goal priorities that reflect your child's individual needs. Please complete both sides of this form and provide us as much input as possible on your future hopes and dreams for your child so we can consider how his educational goals can align. Please return this form to me before _____.

Please complete the following statements:

I feel my child's strength's are:

I have the following concerns regarding my child's education:

What are the most important skills your child will need to achieve in order to be successful transitioning to adulthood after high school?

What are the skills I would like for my child to be able to achieve in one year that reflect my vision of his life as an adult?

Please prioritize the following goal areas indicated with numerals 1 -5, (with 1 being the most critical priority) to focus on for developmental, educational, and goals for your child's future adult life:

_____ **Academics/Pre-academics**

_____ **Learner Behaviors/Executive Function**

For example: organize, initiate and sustain attention and engagement in tasks

_____ **Adaptive Behavior:**

For example: daily living skills, hygiene, ability to navigate the environment, problem solving in unexpected/unfamiliar situations, self advocacy, resolving sensory needs

_____ **Language and Pragmatics**

For example: verbal and nonverbal communication, ability to initiate/maintain a conversation, adapting use of language for a given audience, etc.

_____ **Social/Emotional Behavior**

For example: self-regulation of emotions and behaviors, appropriate interactions in a variety of social situations

Dear _____,

Attached is a draft of your child's Present Level of Performance. Please review this prior to his/her IEP meeting and come with your suggestions for any revisions, updates, and questions related to this draft.

Thank you,



1. Follow/up provide updates on previously discussed issue(s). **2 min**
2. Present the most pressing current issue. **8 min**

THE ISSUE IS: Be concise. *In one or two sentences, get to the heart of the problem. Is it a concern, challenge, opportunity, or reoccurring problem that is becoming more troublesome?*

IT IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE: *What is at stake? How does this affect the students, school, family, district, or other relevant factors? What is the future impact if the issue is not resolved?*

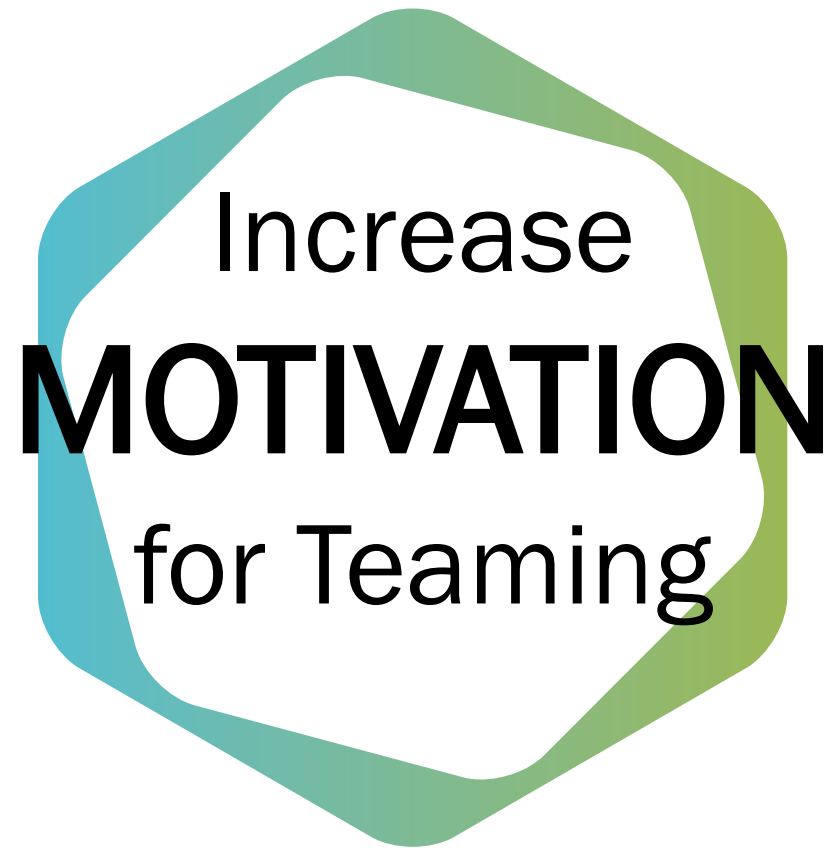
MY IDEAL OUTCOME IS: *What specific results do I want?*

RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION: *How, when, why, where did the issue start? Who are the key players? Which forces are at work? What is the issue's current status?*

WHAT HAVE I DONE UP TO THIS POINT: *What have I done so far? What options am I considering?*

THE HELP I WANT FROM THE GROUP IS: *What results do I want from the group? For example: alternative solutions? Confidence regarding the right decision? Identification of consequences? Where to find more information? Critique of the current plan? Or no help wanted, just wanting to keep others abreast of the current situation?*

3. Opportunity to have others ask questions **5 min**
4. Wrap up discussion with one-sentence recommendations **.5 min**
5. Restate what you have heard re: recommendations **.5 min**
6. State what actions you are committed to taking towards the issue. **2 min**
7. Other need to know(s) to keep on the team's radar: *These are things that are not the focus of discussion at this time, but may be things that the team needs to eventually have direct conversations about, or things we need to be aware of. These may also be celebrations of positive happenings. If more specific discussion is needed, it is your responsibility to set a time to do so.* **2 min**



Increase

MOTIVATION

for Teaming

Motivate Members to Participate



- Project IEP during meeting & make changes during the meeting
 - Respects varying perspectives & reinforce sharing ideas
- Consider how the tone of the meeting invites participation
 - Meet parent and walk down with them
 - Consider seating around the table
 - Have snacks/water available
 - Provide pen and paper for notes
 - Begin the conversation with positive story about the student
 - Introduce the parent to everyone and explain their roles

Evidence Based Practice Resources



AFIRM MODULES

<https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/afirm-online-learning-modules>

OCALEI Autism Internet Modules

<http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/>

Missouri Autism Guidelines Initiative

<https://autismguidelines.dmh.mo.gov/>

Autism Speaks

Variety of toolkits on many topics!

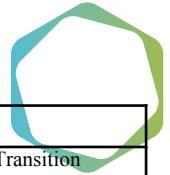
<https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits>

Center for Disease Control Act Early

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>


Evidence Base

Early Childhood (EC), Elementary (EL), Middle/High School (MS/HS)



Evidence-Based Practices	Domains																	
	Academic & Cognition			Behavior			Communication			Play			Social			Transition		
	EC	EL	MS/HS	EC	EL	MS/HS	EC	EL	MS/HS	EC	EL	MS/HS	EC	EL	MS/HS	EC	EL	MS/HS
Antecedent-based Interventions																		
Computer Assisted Instruction																		
Differential Reinforcement																		
Discrete Trial Training																		
Extinction																		
Functional Behavioral Assessment																		
Functional Communication Training																		
Naturalistic Interventions																		
Parent Implemented Interventions																		
Peer Mediated Instruction/Intervention																		
Picture Exchange Communication System																		
Pivotal Response Training																		
Prompting																		
Reinforcement																		
Response Interruption & Redirection																		
Self-Management																		
Social Narratives																		
Social Skills Groups																		
Speech Generating Devices (VOCA)																		
Structured Work Systems																		
Tasks Analysis																		
Time Delay																		
Video Modeling																		
Visual Supports																		

(Wong, et al., 2015)



Thank you!
Questions?

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