Fostering Language, Social Skills, and Peer Relationships in Schools

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1

Introduction

➢ Who am I?

➢ Who are you?

➢ Our topics of discussion
　Language
　Social Skills
　Peer Relationships
　Supporting these areas in schools

2

What will I walk away with?

➢ What I already KNOW

➢ What things were NEW or AH-HA moments for me

➢ What is my plan for IMPLEMENTATION?
   1.
   2.
   3.

3

Language Impairment

➢ Understanding areas of Language Development
   ➢ Receptive Language/Auditory Comprehension - INPUT
   ➢ Expressive Language – OUTPUT
   ➢ Pragmatic Language – SOCIAL LANGUAGE- How we use receptive and expressive language to interact with others

➢ Other Related Areas
   ➢ Executive Function
   ➢ Cognitive Development

4

Receptive Language Impairment

➤ Challenges related to:

　➤ Understanding spoken language
　➤ Understanding written language
　➤ Understanding concepts
　➤ Following directions
　➤ Understanding relationships among pieces of information

In the Classroom, This looks like:

　– Listening to the Teacher
　– Reading Comprehension/ Expository Text
　– Understanding concepts
　– Completing multi-step tasks/Instructions
　– Integrating Information from various sources

5

Expressive Language Impairment

➤ Challenges related to:

　➤ Vocabulary Usage
　➤ Length and complexity of spoken language
　➤ Grammar

• In the Classroom, This Looks Like:

　– Responding to questions
　– Describing Information both orally and written
　– Grammatical Error in written and spoken language

6

Social Language Impairment

- Challenges Related to Social Skills
  - More observable behaviors – greetings, tone of voice, contextually appropriate language

- Challenges Related to Social Competence
  - More ambiguous behaviors – reading social cues, decision making, understanding unwritten rules

In the Classroom, this looks like:

- Difficulty Interacting
- Difficulty Reading Non-verbal Cues
- Group projects
- Difficulty making and keeping friends
- Difficulty navigating unstructured activities (Lunch, Recess, etc)

7

Impairments in Executive Function

➤ Understanding how various pieces of information go together.

➤ Understanding relationships between pieces of information

➤ The ability to use and organize information

Oversees how we understand, use, and apply LANGUAGE

8

Other Co-Occurring Conditions

➢ ADHD

➢ Autism Spectrum Disorder

➢ Learning Disability

➢ Down Syndrome

➢ Articulation/Phonological Impairment

➢ Central Auditory Processing Disorder

9

Strategies to Support Language and Social Impairments and Promote Peer Relationships

Putting it all together to support language and social needs

10

Where to Begin

➢ Meet the child where they are

➢ Assess STRENGTHS, ABILITIES, and EXISTING SKILLS

➢ Use these strengths, abilities and existing skills to support more deficit areas.

11

Multisensory Approach to Learning

➢ **SEE** it
➢ **TOUCH** it
➢ **FEEL** it
➢ **HEAR** it
➢ **EXPERIENCE** it

➢ Children with language impairment often learn best when they can experience the learning, not just **HEAR** it.

12

Multisensory Learning

➢ Making Learning as **VISUAL** and **HANDS-ON** as possible.

➢ Creating opportunities for **EXPOSURE** to and **EXPERIENCE** with concepts and learning material

➢ **RELATING** the learning. Make the learning material relatable to some real life experience

13

Pre-Teaching

➢ Lay a foundation of knowledge or experiences prior to the didactic learning experience.

➢ Provide real-life experiences that expose the child to information that is coming.

➢ Talk about it! Keep a constant dialogue going about the topic.

14

Make Learning Authentic

➢ The more **AUTHENTIC** the experience, the more **RELATEABLE** the information will be and thus the more MEANINGFUL the information will be.

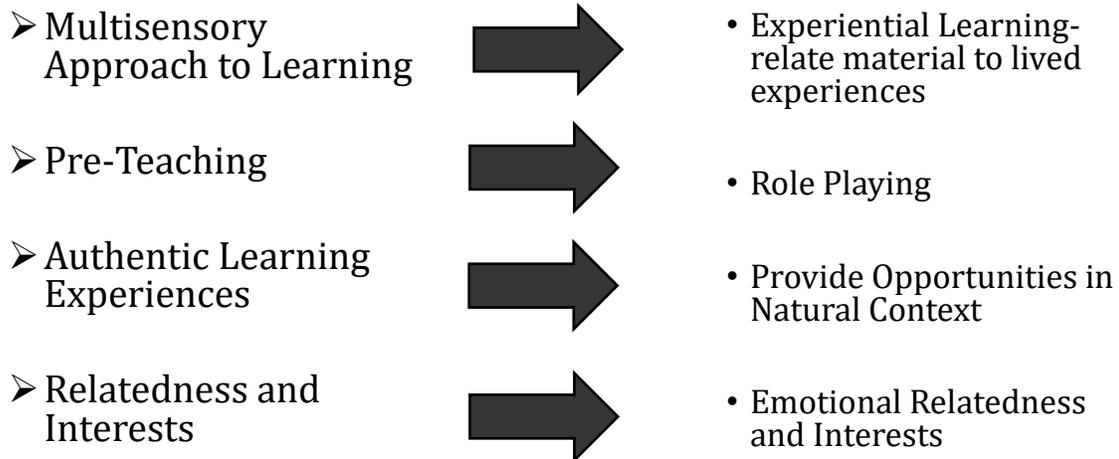➢ The more meaningful the material, the more likely the learning is successful.

15

Relatedness and Interest

➢ The more able the child is to **RELATE** the new information to some lived experience, the more likely the information will be retained.

➢ With deficits in auditory comprehension, teaching information in ways that are relatable to some experience, a multisensory approach begins to naturally occur.

➢ Tap the child's interests in order to draw them in to the learning. Relate the content to one or more of the child's interests

16

Applying these strategies in the Social Context

➢ Multisensory Approach to Learning

➢ Pre-Teaching

➢ Authentic Learning Experiences

➢ Relatedness and Interests

- Experiential Learning- relate material to lived experiences

- Role Playing

- Provide Opportunities in Natural Context

- Emotional Relatedness and Interests

17

Traditional Social Skills Approaches

➢ Social Skills Training (SST) – typically in a group format
  ➢ targets conversation skills and nonverbal behaviors, can improve targeted skills but with little generalization to those not explicitly taught – White, Keonig, and Scahill (2007) ; Jamison and Schuttler (2017)

➢ "social skills programs must be designed to fit the individual needs of the child, as opposed to forcing the child to "fit" into the chosen social skills strategy or strategies." – Bellini, Peters, Benner, and Hopf (2007)

18

Relating Experiences

➢ Talk about situations that the child observes. Talk about feelings and emotions related to the situation. As the child has similar experiences, tie the two together

As you are reading with the child – "X looks mad. Why do you think he's mad? You're right. He's mad because Y took his toy. That's kind of like when you were mad when Z took your toy. What do you think he should do now?"

During future experiences, tie emotions and coaching back to the teaching experience.

19

Role Playing

➢ Practice interacting in a controlled environment. Provide coaching and discussion about what might be said, how it is said, and potential responses

➢ Role play Adult to Peer, then Peer to Peer, then provide opportunities to practice new skills in a semi-structured situation such as a small lunch group.

20

Provide Opportunities to Practice in Natural Contexts

➢ Now that you've role played and worked out several potential interactions and provided coaching, create opportunities to observe the child use those skills. Coach as necessary.

➢ Consider training a "wing-man" who can act as the coach and allow the teacher/support to fade out.

➢ Use each child's strengths to support others children's areas of need

21

Emotional Relatedness* and Interests

➢ We all experience emotions in different ways

➢ We tend to be drawn to those who have similar experiences

➢ Build Social Skill programming on interests, not needs.

*(Grandin, T., & Panek, R., 2013)

22

Fostering Peer Relationship

➤ Be careful no to be forceful

➤ Build social groups based on:

  ➤ Shared Interests
  ➤ Child strengths

➤ Help them find their Peeps!

23

Starting with individual preferences and interests rather than needs/deficits

"Consider the preferences of the individual [with ASD] as being equally important to the use of an evidence-based intervention. Provide individuals the opportunity to choose their peers, activities, and environments as the foundation for successful focused intervention approaches."

(Stump, Dunn & Tomchek, 2017)

24

Supportive Strategies

➢ Consider where **STRENGTHS** and **INTERESTS** intersect

➢ Connecting children to others through **SHARED INTERESTS**

➢ Using **INTERESTS**, **STRENGTHS**, and **ABILITIES** to build skills in deficit areas

➢ Building Buddy Systems

25

If the Goal is Generalization...

We must consider:

Situating our therapy/sessions within natural contexts

Building our therapy/sessions around shared interests

Connecting individuals who can get together outside of the sessions to promote generalization
In school environments, you are uniquely situated to make this happen more naturally

26

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Other factors to consider

➢ Some other things to consider that can intensify challenges related to language impairments

  ➢ Other Diagnoses
  ➢ Sensory Differences
  ➢ Attentional Needs
  ➢ Impulsivity
  ➢ Activity Level
  ➢ Home factors – sleep, health, situational

27

Some Other Considerations

As we design supports to apply within the school environment consider the following:

Person Centered Factors
- Preferences
- Interests
- Values

Environmental Factors
- Environmental
- Sensory
- Social

28

The Three Rules of Implementation

➢ Be Willing to Try Anything

➢ Have a Reason for Doing It- Be able to explain your purpose/reasons

➢ Be Open to the Fact that it Might Not Work

29

Doing the Dance, Turning the Dial

➢ Think about providing support like doing a dance.
   ➢ Reading the child and adjusting your teaching, coaching, and support to meet the child where they are and extend the learning to the next level.

➢ It's a DIAL you are constantly turning
   ➢ As you read where the child is, dial your support up and down based on their needs

30
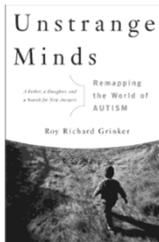
What's the Moral of the Story

When designing intervention (particularly social interventions), we need to ensure that our starting point is the child/individual/family and their **STRENGTHS**, **ABILITIES**, and **INTERESTS** rather than the disabling condition or diagnosis*

*This does not mean we ignore conditions, needs, and deficits. It simply means we need to harness existing strengths, abilities and resources to support deficit areas when challenges arise.

(Braun, Dunn & Tomchek, 2017; Saleebey, 2009)

31

- **"...When it comes to a child with a disability, doctors and educators, and parents too, can easily spend too much time on what the child cannot do, meanwhile not noticing what he can do. We can be so busy dealing with what is absent that we ignore what is right before our eyes. It's often difficult to understand that what we need to make visible is not darkness but light..."**

Unstrange Minds
A Father, a Daughter and a Search for New Answers
Remapping the World of AUTISM
Roy Richard Grinker

Roy Richard Grinker
Unstrange Minds
p.280

32

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33

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34