Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for Educators

JUNE 15, 2018

Objectives

Participants will:
- Identify the 2 diagnostic categories for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Understand the impact of ASD symptoms for students
- Make considerations for their own educational environments for students with ASD
What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?
A complex neurodevelopmental condition

1. Impairments in social communication
2. Presence of restricted behavior interests and activities

ASD is a spectrum condition
The skills and challenges among individuals with ASD can vary widely.
The level of impact of ASD can also depend on other developmental and behavioral health factors.

The prevalence of ASD has increased

ASD prevalence is 1 in 59
Centers for Disease Control Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network
ADDM 2018
Or 1.7%
ASD eligibilities rising in schools

Autism accounts for about 5-6% of all disabilities served as part of IDEA and many participate in regular education for at least part of the day.


Educational eligibility of ASD focuses on the learning impact

Educational need
Educational eligibility can only be determined when all aspects of the evaluation, as defined by the Public Education Department, are completed
Educational eligibility does not require a medical diagnosis

Medical diagnosis of ASD focuses on the impact of functioning

Medical professional (pediatrician, neurologist, psychiatrist) provides, or participates on a multi-disciplinary team that provides, a diagnosis (criteria is based on DSM-5)
May include some medical tests to explore other possible diagnoses, symptoms and related issues
ASD consists of 2 core deficit areas:

| Deficits in social communication | Presence of restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities |

Levels of support vary for each core deficit area

- Symptom severity is variable.
- How much support does an individual need at this point in time?
- How might this translate to their presentation in the school setting?

Social communication differences can impact learning
Social-emotional reciprocity

- May prefer to play alone → Identify ways to integrate into activities
- May struggle to respond → Be sure to give plenty of time to process
- May struggle with back and forth conversation → Provide appropriate coaching
- Difficulty understanding idioms → Use plain language

Nonverbal social communicative behaviors

- Limited facial expressions → Gain attention
- Limited gestures → Check for understanding
- Difficulty integrating nonverbal behaviors → Visual supports
- Imitation is limited → Imitate and expand on their behaviors

Relationships/play

- Limited interest in relationships → Link favorite activities with people
- Sharing space challenges → Structure activities for give and take
- Pretend play → Model
Repetitive behaviors and special interests can impact behavior

**Repetitive behaviors**

**Unusual or intense movements**
- Evaluate the form and intensity of repetitive movements and noises.
  - Do they interfere with other activities (i.e., will the child stop when asked or when there is something else to do)?
  - Do they interfere with learning?
  - Do they interfere with social relationships?
- Evaluate whether stopping/changing them is a priority.

**Repetitive noises**

**Echolalia**

**Routines/rituals**

**Insistence on sameness**

**Difficulties with transitions**

**Schedules**

**Visual aids**

**Structure and routine**
Special interests

Integrate!

Incorporate strengths

Sensory differences

Strong reactions to sensory input (e.g., noise, lights, sounds, smells)

Quiet environments (visual, auditory) are usually best

May seem over or under reactive to sensory experiences

ASD has a high number of comorbidities that can influence learning

[Diagram showing various conditions such as Intellectual Disability, Genetic conditions, and Anxiety]
Individuals with ASD have a range of intellectual capacities

Approximately 30% of those diagnosed with ASD have an intellectual disability and 24% have borderline intellectual functioning.

Deficits in adaptive functioning can occur with individuals with ASD regardless of cognitive abilities.

Individuals with ASD have a range of language capacities

Difficulties in the acquisition and use of language

Language abilities substantially below age expectations, impacting functioning

Reduced vocabulary, limited sentence structure, impairments in discourse

Medical problems can be common in ASD

- Sleep
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Seizures
- Feeding
Comorbid behavioral health diagnoses can impact a student with ASD

- ADHD
- Depression
- Anxiety Disorders
- Other

Inevitably, behavior problems can occur
Problem behaviors begin because they allow the child to get needs met
- Get something
- Escape from people, places or activities
- Get attention
- Allow the child to get, or get away from, sensory input

National Standards Project Phase 2 (NSP2)

ESTABLISHED TREATMENTS (14)

Behavioral Interventions
- Cognitive Behavioral Intervention Package
- Comprehensive Behavioral Treatment for Young Children
- Language Training (Production)
- Modeling
- Naturalistic Teaching Strategies
- Parent Training
- Peer Training Package
- Pivotal Response Training

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxAh8pLYF5I

Schedules
- Scripting
- Self-Management
- Social Skills Package
- Story-based Intervention
National Standards Project 2

For children to young adults under 22 years

Unestablished (13)
- Animal-assisted Therapy
- Auditory Integration Training
- Concept Mapping
- DIR/Floor Time
- Facilitated Communication
- Gluten-free/Casein-free diet
- Movement-based Intervention
- SENSE Theatre Intervention
- Shock Therapy
- Social Behavioral Learning Strategy
- Social Cognition Intervention
- Social Thinking Intervention

Emerging (18)
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication Devices
- Developmental Relationship-based Treatment
- Exercise
- Exposure Package
- Functional Communication Training
- Imitation-based Intervention
- Initiation Training
- Language Training (Production & Understanding)
- Massage Therapy
- Multi-component Package
- Music Therapy
- Picture Exchange Communication System
- Reductive Package
- Sign Instruction
- Social Communication Intervention
- Structured Teaching
- Technology-based Intervention
- Theory of Mind Training

National Standards Project 2

For adults 22 years and older

Established (1)
- Behavioral Interventions

Emerging (1)
- Vocational Training Package

Unestablished (4)
- Cognitive Behavioral Intervention Package
- Modeling
- Music Therapy
- Sensory Integration Package

### National Professional Development Center on ASD (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent-Based Interventions</th>
<th>Functional Communication Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Behavioral Intervention</td>
<td>Modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential Reinforcement</td>
<td>Naturalistic Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrete Trial Training</td>
<td>Parent-Implemented Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>Peer-Mediated Instruction and Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extinction</td>
<td>Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Behavior Assessment</td>
<td>Pivotal Response Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### National Professional Development Center on ASD (2014) cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompting</th>
<th>Social Skills Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcement</td>
<td>Structured Play Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Interruption/Redirection</td>
<td>Task Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripting</td>
<td>Technology-aided Instruction and Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Management</td>
<td>Time Delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Narratives</td>
<td>Video Modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td>Visual Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Resources available for educators

- **Implementation Briefs**: [http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/briefs](http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/briefs)
Neurodiversity in ASD

Neurological conditions such as ASD are normal variations in the human genome.

Self-advocacy
Identity-first language
Cure vs. Treatment

References