Understanding Autism: A Guide For Secondary Teachers

LEAs may struggle to find relevant, quality information that is useful in providing support to special and general education teachers. Provided within this month’s newsletter is a link to Understanding Autism: A Guide For Secondary Teachers from the Organization for Autism Research. The guide contains modules on characteristics of autism, integrated classroom supports, challenging behaviors, and effective teaching supports. Written and visual presentation of material provides awareness of struggles a student with autism faces in the inclusive setting.

Often information and strategies received about autism are generally geared towards elementary age students or younger. However, many strategies can be adapted to fit any age. Below is a link to access the guide. Please copy and paste the link into your web browser.


For implementation, this guide can be broken into sessions and used during faculty meetings.

Disclaimer: This monthly newsletter is not intended to endorse people, products, or methodologies. Its sole intent is to be a source of awareness for teachers working with students with autism. Pictures used in monthly newsletter are copied from Google Images.
Picture Schedules

While no two students with ASD are alike, one of the characteristics common to most is a need for consistency in their daily routines. Picture schedules represent what happens next and foster calmness to the student. Using pictures to communicate is not instinctive. It must be taught and implemented with fidelity. Never assume a child understands the meaning of a picture. Building a picture vocabulary takes time.

Below is a compilation of pictures that depict varying schedules. Object schedules are used for students who haven’t made the connection that pictures represent objects. Picture schedules are used for varying levels and ages. Word schedules are used for higher functioning students who are able to read and follow this kind of schedule. Apps also provide a way for students to stay on task and on schedule.

Copy and paste these links into your web browser to learn more:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtgQbKPGP6k
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNfnuuATlkA

A WOW Moment

Don’t give up on proven methods. “If at first you don’t succeed try, try, try again” is a famous quote written by Thomas H. Palmer. Speaking of fidelity and a never give up attitude, I had a wow moment as I sat and listened to Deborah Owens of Enterprise City Schools present at the Early Intervention to Preschool Conference. Deborah stated that she used PECS for an entire year before one of her students began to use it. The student is now making ‘I want’ statements and detaching the sentence strip to present to his communication partner. The student is on his way to communicating! This is the very definition of perseverance with fidelity. Way to go Deborah!

We have begun to hear wonderful comments around the state of the success teachers and students are having with PECS.
Choice Boards

Choices: We all make them. How we make them depends on many factors. For some students with autism, communicating those choices can be difficult to impossible without intervention.

Choice boards are another strategy used to prevent potential meltdowns.

A choice board is a selection of pictures that represent desired objects or activities for a student. If a student’s schedule allows free time, the student is able to communicate their choice of an object or activity by choosing from the choice board.

Boards will vary according to student preference and need.

Use first-then boards to start delaying gratification for one activity. Start small and make it positive!

What’s Available from the ALSDE?

Special Education Services accepts requests for Educational Diagnostic Evaluations for Autism Spectrum Disorders through Glenwood, Inc.

Information required: Signed Notice and Consent for Initial Evaluation
Or
Signed Notice and Consent for Reevaluation

Any and all requests must go through the Special Education Coordinator. Request forms are located on the ALSDE website.

Glenwood, Inc. will coordinate and provide timely diagnostic evaluations in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) for students referred for an evaluation by local education agencies. Glenwood, Inc. will provide experienced and qualified consultants to administer the evaluations. Evaluations include: case preparation, onsite parent interview with the Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R), teacher/school personnel interview, student observation, ASD rating scales, ADOS-2 administration, consultation, and feedback with school and family. The school will receive a diagnostic summary to include a comprehensive report within 14 calendar days after the evaluation.