DISRUPTING THE TEACHING DOLDRUMS: STEPPING INTO AN INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE OUR OWN TEACHING PRACTICES

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THANK YOU!

MY LESSONS

TEACHING IS HARD, VERY HARD

ESPECIALLY, WHEN DONE WELL

- Teaching requires us to execute an amalgam of skills, often simultaneously within a constantly changing context.
- It requires that we spend multitudes of unpaid hours in preparation, grading, and communication.
- It requires that we persist in the face of challenges, with minimal positive feedback.
- It requires that we get better at our job over time.

WE GOT PROBLEMS

Teachers are leaving the field at high rates

- Between the years 2005-2016, the number of special educators decreased by 17% despite only a 1% decrease in number of students with disabilities (Education Week Research Center, 2018).
- Between the years 2010-2017, there was a 39% decrease in enrollment in teacher education programs (HECSE, 2021)
- Covid created more job loss and early retirements (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

SOMETIMES, WE HAVE NOT BEEN PREPARED

TO DO THIS HARD WORK

- Teacher programs vary in quality
  - Barnhill et al., 2014; Conroy et al., 2014; Morningstar & Benitez, 2013
- May not provide sufficient depth or breadth of content (Knight et al., 2019; Pennington et al., 2021)
- Often provide training experiences that are in sharp contrast to what they will experience in the classroom

TEACHER TRAINING

COMMUNICATION SUPPORTS

- **70% of undergraduate and 60% of graduate programs do not offer courses in communication**

- **33% of undergraduates not adequately prepared, 16% graduates**

- **Focus on behavioral interventions, but more emphasis on knowledge than practice**

Teacher Preparation in Communication Instruction for Students With Extensive Support Needs

Robert C. Pennington[1], Virginia L. Walker[1], and Melissa C. Tapp[1]

Abstract

In this investigation, we surveyed 51 faculty members who were involved in teacher preparation programs in the area of extensive support needs (ESN) across a range of institutions of higher education. We asked participants to respond to questions related to the quality and quantity of program content focused on communication instruction and supports for students with ESN. Overall, findings indicated variability in the quality and quantity of teacher preparation–related communication instruction. In addition, participants described barriers related to teacher preparation in this area.

Keywords
communication instruction, extensive support needs, severe disabilities, teacher preparation

One of the most critical functions of education is to prepare students to communicate effectively across a diverse and expansive range of opportunities. Unfortunately, many students with disabilities, especially those with extensive support needs (ESN), often face difficulties acquiring communication repertoires sufficient for gaining maximum benefit from their school experience and ultimately, achieving high quality of life outcomes (Carter et al., 2012). Students with ESN include the population of students who receive special education services under the eligibility categories of intellectual disability, autism, and multiple disabilities and, due to their pervasive and significant support needs, are often eligible to take their state's alternate assessment (Taub et al., 2017). Many of these students present with complex communication needs (Andzik et al., 2018),

with no conventional form of communication with which to navigate their adult lives (Kearns et al., 2011).

Students' inability to effectively communicate with others may have extensive and lasting negative effects on their success in multiple areas. Those with ESN and fewer communication skills may have less access to academic content and high-quality instruction (Kearns et al., 2011; Kurth et al., 2016; Pennington & Courtade, 2015), are more likely to receive instruction in restrictive educational settings (Kleinert et al., 2015), and have fewer opportunities to develop strong peer networks (Feldman et al., 2016; Kurth et al., 2016).

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THEN THE ENVIRONMENT GETS TO WORK ON US

- **We receive few reinforcers for effective teaching behavior**
  - **These teaching behaviors fade over time**
  - **Especially, when we are isolated**
- **Less than effective practices are often reinforced**
- **We are sometimes led astray by less trained and more experienced colleagues**

WE LOOK TO IN SERVICE TRAINING

DESPITE THE AVAILABILITY OF EFFECTIVE MODELS

- **Often broad with limited follow-up**
  - **Like this training, Isn't it ironic?** →
- **Out of context**
- **Sometimes, not evidence-based content**

ACCESS TO RESEARCH

- Restricted access
- Literature may not be helpful?
  - Published in behavior or disability specific journals
  - Traditional and separate schools
  - Special education or separate setting
 - Researchers as change agents
  - Limited teacher training

TAPP, PENNINGTON, CLAUSEN, & CARPENTER, IN PRESS

Descriptive Analysis by Study

	Number and Percent of Studies Reviewed	
	N	%
Journal		
Behavior	28	30%
Disability Specific	26	28%
Education	11	12%
Dissertation	19	20%
Speech/language	9	10%
School		
Traditional	40	42%
Separate	37	39%
NR	18	19%
Setting		
SPED Class	47	51%
General	5	5%
Separate	31	33%
Other	10	11%
Change Agent		
Researcher	55	59%
Teacher	17	18%
Speech/language pathologist	1	1%
Paraprofessional	6	7%
Peer	1	1%
Therapist	7	8%
Other	2	2%
NR	4	4%
Teacher Training		
Behavior Skills Training	16	17%
Video Modeling	1	1%
PECS®	2	2%
Online Module	1	1%
NR	73	79%

Note: 93 total studies were included; NR- not reported; PECS®- Picture Exchange Communication System.

SOMETIMES, WE CRASH OR JUST GET STUCK
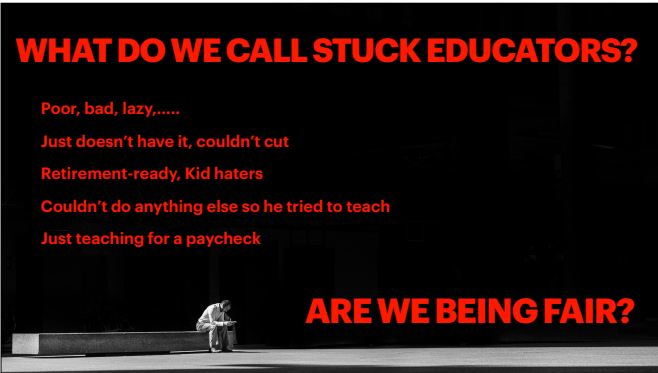
WHAT DO WE CALL STUCK EDUCATORS?

Poor, bad, lazy,.....

Just doesn't have it, couldn't cut

Retirement-ready, Kid haters

Couldn't do anything else so he tried to teach

Just teaching for a paycheck

ARE WE BEING FAIR?

"I WANT TO BE A MEDIOCRE TEACHER"

SAID NO ONE, EVER

CONSIDER

- Are our students inherently bad, or just have a few contextually inappropriate or harmful behaviors?
- Do they choose to be "bad" or have they learned that these behaviors "work for them" in the given environment?
- Should we punish our students by withholding compassion?

CIRCULAR REASONING TRAP

BAD

Why bad?

Does bad things

Why do bad things?

A MIRROR

- What if we looked at our own teaching as a collection of behaviors, as we do our students' behavior?
- Teachers behave
  - We plan, teach, provide feedback
- Teacher behaviors collectively comprise a repertoire
  - Sometimes it is insufficient
- We learn what works through interactions with the environment our circumstances

CIRCUMSTANCES

SELECT OUR TEACHING BEHAVIOR

- Teacher often sends student out of the room,
  - Student is disruptive and distraction is removed
- Teacher presents materials unsystematically during intensive instruction
  - Limited training, not taking continuous data from which to identify errors in teaching
- Teacher does not communicate with parents
  - Previous communication attempts have been punished

SHIFT OUR LENS
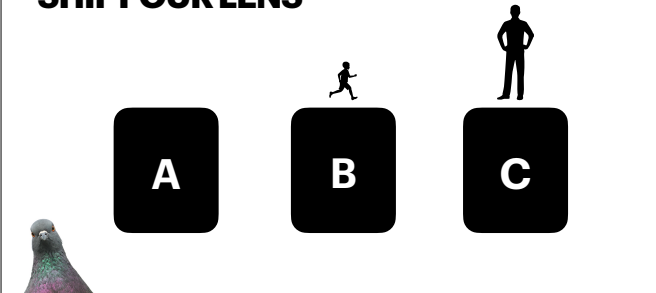
BEHAVIOR OF EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

YE OLD ABC'S

Antecedent

Antecedents that evoke expected behaviors
(e.g., bell rings, student behavior, paraprofessional interaction, parent question0

Behavior

Expected Teacher Behavior
(e.g., Provide positive feedback, collaborate with family members, plan effective lessons…….)

Consequence

?

POTENTIAL REINFORCERS?

- Student progress?
- Compensation?
- Avoid problem behavior?
- Avoid due process?
- Administrator feedback?
- Parent feedback?
- Collegial feedback?
- Consultant feedback?

RESEARCHER/CONSULTANT FEEDBACK

AND REINFORCED
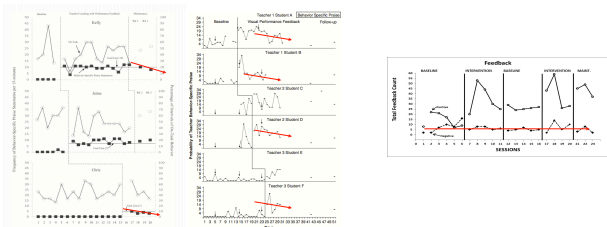
DUCHAINE ET AL. 2011; REINKE ET AL., 2007; SWIEGERT ET AL., 2015

TAKE A SECOND TO CONSIDER SOMETHING YOU MIGHT LIKE TO CHANGE AND HOW IT MIGHT BE RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT?

WE CAN CHANGE

- Intensive instruction (Mason et al., 2017)
- Function-based treatments (DiGennaro et al. 2007)
- Behavior specific praise (Reinke et al, 2007)
- Reading instruction (Brownell et al., 2017)
- Data based decision making (Browder et al., 1987)
- …………………………………

BUT HOW?

DON'T DO ANYTHING ILLEGAL

AND TAKE IT EASY

WE GET REAL

- Nobody can do everything
  - "A failure is not always a mistake, it may simply be the best one can do under the circumstances. The real mistake is to stop trying. " B.F. Skinner

- Remember, teaching well is hard

AND MAKE A PLAN

A REASONABLE PLAN

- Avoid the New Year's Resolution approach
  - Select a few goals
  - Don't go it alone
  - Change your environment
  - Monitor your progress
  - Don't be so hard on yourself

FIGURE OUT WHERE YOU NEED TO GO

- Carefully and honestly consider your programs' strengths and weaknesses
- Invite feedback from trusted colleagues
- Use established quality indicators
- Then take a breath

WHERE ARE YOU?

- Can all students use conventional communication skills to control their access to preferred and non preferred conditions?

- Are all students and teaching staff engaged in _meaningful_ instruction throughout the day?

- Do we collect and graph data, and use those data to make instructional decisions?

- Do we always use good instructional practices including ensuring when necessary we obtain students' attention, present clear directives, prompt when necessary, and provide feedback?

- Do we use function-based approaches to challenging behavior?

- Is my team functional and efficient?

DEVELOP SOME GOALS

AND OBJECTIVES

- All students will have a functional communication system with which to make requests
  - I will use the VB-MAPP to assess beginning communication skills for all non-vocal students
  - I will increase the number of instructional trials on requesting to 50 per day
- No students will sit for more than 10 minutes without instruction
  - Mr. Frank and Ms. Rodriguez will lead at least one small group per day by September
  - I will provide activity matrices to paraprofessionals depicting their responsibilities at the beginning of each day.

DEVELOP SOME GOALS

AND OBJECTIVES

- We will collect data on students' IEP goals at least three times a week.
  - Mr. Banner will collect data for three types of skills with 90% reliability
  - All staff will plot data on a line graph following the completion the instructional session with 80% accuracy

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DOCUMENT

- Set manageable steps
  - Make the first ones easy!
  - Delineate responsibility
  - Identify resources needed

Goal: All nonvocal students will use a form of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) to make requests.

Short-term Objective: Teacher will assess current student levels of communicative functioning and identify an appropriate form of AAC to teach.

Start: 8/10   Projected End: 8/20   Record Progress: Permanent progress

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Get three VB-MAPP protocols and prepare assessment materials	Administer VB-MAPP assessments	Meet with parents and SLP to review results and select instructional targets
By when: 8/12	By when: 8/20	By when: 8/29
Resources	Resources	Resources
VB-MAPP and assessment materials	None	Consultation
From: SLP & District	From: N/A	From: SLP & Parents

Short-term Objective: Each student will receive at least 150 instructional trials a day (on requesting).

Start: 9/5   Projected End: 9/30   Record Progress: Event recording

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Train staff to implement instruction & conduct preference assessments	Implement training during breakfast, snack, and lunch	Develop a matrix to assign classroom staff the responsibility of delivering trials during other periods of the day
By when: 9/12	By when: 9/20	By when: 9/30
Resources	Resources	Resources
VB-MAPP	AAC materials	Matrix
AAC materials	Data sheets	
Fidelity checklists		
From: SLP	From: Teacher	From: Teacher & SLP

MONITOR PROGRESS

YES!

- What will it look like when the goal is met.
- Permanent product
  - Percent of objectives with graphed data
  - Removal of visual barriers from the classroom
- Changes in duration
  - Number of minutes or percent of time students or paraprofessionals are not engaged in instruction

MEASURE TEACHER BEHAVIOR?

YES!

- Changes in number
  - Rate
    - Rate of positive teacher feedback
  - Percent
    - Of intervals with teacher feedback
    - Percent of intervals with paraprofessionals engaged in instruction

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MEASURE TEACHER BEHAVIOR?

YES!

- Procedural fidelity
  - Of course, collecting data on the accurate implementation of a procedures

Phase 1 Participant Responses

Pre-Session	Trial 1	Trial
1. Has training materials ready (binder, pictures of preferred items, preferred items).		
2. Has data sheet and writing utensil ready.		
3. Ensures preferred items are out of participant's reach.		
4. Selects items for training that have been previously identified as preferred in a stimulus preference assessment.		
5. Ensures items are preferred by giving free access to training item **before** the 1st trial with that item.		
Session		
6. Places ONE picture that corresponds to ONE preferred item in hand on the table directly in front of the participant.		
7. Presents item to the participant, but out of his or her reach.		
8. Uses different item after every 5 trials or less.		
9. Uses dime-sized pieces if edibles are used.		
10. Waits 1-2 s for the participant to respond.		
11. If the participant does not reach for the picture, gives gestural (i.e., point) prompt and waits 1-2 s for a response.		
12. If the participant does not reach for the picture, waits for him/her to reach out, then opens one hand out to receive picture.		
13. Once the participant has the picture in hand, waits for him/her to reach out, then opens one hand out to receive picture.		
14. Does not take the picture from the participant.		
15. Does not provide verbal prompts at any time.		
16. When a correct response is emitted, provides appropriate reinforcement (i.e., praise and access to item).		
17. Provides reinforcement on EVERY trial, regardless if prompting was required.		
18. Gives access to preferred item for approximately 15-20 s OR until participant has consumed item in its entirety.		
19. Correctly scores responses on data sheet immediately after each trial is complete.		
20. Returns picture to table (or binder) while the participant plays with or consumes item.		
TOTAL SCORE		

Rosales et al., 2009

GET YOUR VILLAGE
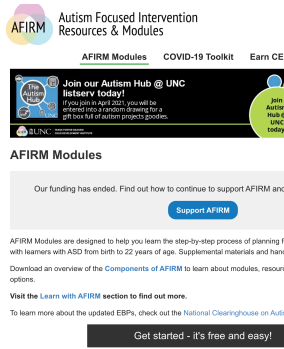
AGAIN, DON'T GO IT ALONE

- In your building, with whom do you share your successes?
- Gather other teachers, related service personnel, district supports, paraprofessionals, parents.
- Data suggest peer coaching works (Showers & Joyce, 1996).
  - Peers can provide instruction, prompts, strong feedback contingencies.
- Provide and embrace opportunities to be observed and receive feedback.

CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

GET TRAINING

- Seek out high quality training around evidence based practices
- Find a professional development co-conspirator
- Chunk and practice

Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules

AFIRM Modules   COVID-19 Toolkit   Earn CE

Join our Autism Hub @ UNC listserv today!
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AFIRM Modules

Our funding has ended. Find out how to continue to support AFIRM and

Support AFIRM

AFIRM Modules are designed to help you learn the step-by-step process of planning for with learners with ASD from birth to 22 years of age. Supplemental materials and hand

Download an overview of the **Components of AFIRM** to learn about modules, resour options.

Visit the Learn with AFIRM section to find out more.

To learn more about the updated EBPs, check out the National Clearinghouse on Auti

Get started - it's free and easy!

PD PARTNERS

TRAINING RESOURCES

- National Autism Center (NAC) **https://www.mayinstitute.org/national-autism-center/**
- National Professional Development Center on ASD **https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/national-professional-development-center-autism-spectrum-disorder**
- Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism Training (TSLAT) **https://www.txautism.net/**
- Cambridge Center for Behavior Studies **https://behavior.org/**
- Project IMPACT- UNC Charlotte **https://projectimpact.uncc.edu/**

PRACTICE MAKES..

WHEN TRAINING OR SEEKING TRAINING

- Use a behavior skills training protocol
  - Written directions or script
  - Model
  - Rehearsal with feedback until fidelity

Guidelines for Using Behavioral Skills Training to Provide Teacher Support

Florence D. DiGennaro Reed, Abigail L. Blackman, Tyler G. Erath, Denys Brand, and Matthew D. Novak

BST

DEVELOP DIRECTIONS

- Using limited jargon
- Develop a behavioral recipe
- Discuss

BST

MODEL

- In natural context
  - Demonstrate multiple examples of the target behavior
  - At high levels of fidelity

BST

REHEARSE

- Alone, rehearsal is not a strong behavior change procedure (Ward-Horner & Sturmey, 2012)
- Feedback is essential
- Rehearse until a criterion of 90-100% is reached

BST

FEEDBACK

- Should be provided during rehearsal and delivered immediately after a rehearsal opportunity
- Be specific
- Don't forget this can be difficult, so be positive in tone and content
- "Here is what you can improve"

Teacher Support

Guidelines for Using Behavioral Skills Training to Provide Teacher Support

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# CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

USE PROMPTS

- Scripted curricula
- Fidelity checklists
- Embedding prompts within texts
  - Hardy, Pennington et al., 2020
- Haptic timers (e.g., MotivAider)

CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- **Low rates of feedback?**
  - **Train students to recruit feedback**
  - **Train peers to reinforce each other**
  - **Train students to provide feedback**
- **Need proximity to students?**
  - **Move your desk to a less accessible area to increase your proximity to students**

Sherman & Cormier 1974; Stokes, Fowler, & Baer, 1978

USE SELF-MANAGEMENT

- **Teaching individuals to set goals, self-record, and self-monitor their behavior**
  - **May facilitate maintained responding**
  - **Places adult learner in the center of the intervention process**
  - **May permit inspection of data when precluded practice access**

SELF MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

USE SELF MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- **Effective and familiar**
  - **Prompts**
  - **Starting initial steps of behavior chain**
    - **(e.g., leaving tomorrow's lesson plan on paras desk before you leave school)**
 - **Self monitoring**

EXAMPLE 1: KALIS, VANNEST, & PARKER

- Targeted teachers use of praise during scripted lessons
  - Presented teacher a daily goal
  - Teacher used hand held counter to count praise statements
  - Reviewed with researcher/coach after session
  - Responding maintained

FIGURE 1. Frequency of overall teacher praise statements.
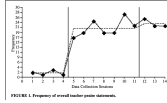
EXAMPLE 2: BROWDER ET AL., 1986

- Implemented a training on data-based decision making
  - Taught self evaluation of trends (Split middle technique)
  - Self recording of decisions
  - Supervisor reviewed data independently and
    did not provide feedback
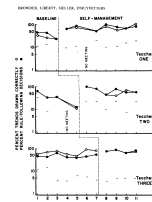
BRINGING IT BACK

- There no bad educators, just ineffective/ harmful behaviors or practices
- If the environment selects these behaviors/ practice then it should be changed
- It might take a small committed and objective army to change an environment
- We should make small changes and monitor our progress

THANK YOU!
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