



Structured Teaching **Mary Flory, M.Ed.**

The TEACCH Autism Program at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, under the leadership of Dr. Eric Schopler, developed the intervention approach of Structured Teaching to support and teach individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. This approach is based on understanding the 'culture of autism,' and the use of individualized visual supports to accommodate the difficulties with auditory processing, organization, combining ideas, attention, communication, time concepts, and attachment to routines.

Structured Teaching creates highly structured environments to support individuals in a variety of education, community, and home/living settings (Mesibov, Shea, & Schopler, 2005). The five major components of structured teaching include physical organization and visual boundaries, schedules, routines, works systems, and task organization.

Physical organization involves the creation of environments that have clear boundaries and use visual supports to specify the activities that take place in each area. Visual schedules are used to denote planned activities and events throughout the day; representation is based on individual needs, but can be words, icons, pictures, photographs, and/or objects. Routines are taught in the same visual format, allowing individuals to become more comfortable, flexible, and independent, in their environments. Work systems visually structure sequences that provide opportunities to practice previously taught skills, concepts, or activities. (Mavroupoulou et al., 2011; Schopler, 1995). Work systems visually communicate to the individual four important pieces of information:

1. What work or activity to complete
2. How many activities to complete
3. When is the work finished
4. What happens when the work is finished
- 5.

The last component of Structured Teaching, structured tasks, shows individuals *what to do*, simply by looking at the set up of the materials.

TASN ATBS Online Newsletter

January 2016

Upcoming Training Opportunities:

Tri-State Autism Spectrum Disorder 2015-2016 Webinar Series

The Tri-State Autism Spectrum Disorder Webinar Series is made available through collaboration with the Colorado Department of Education, Kansas TASN Autism and Tertiary Behavior Supports, and the Nebraska Autism Spectrum Disorders Network.

Anyone with an interest in learning about the characteristics of autism spectrum disorders and evidence-based practices is invited to attend any of our webinars. This may include administrators, general education teachers, specialist teachers (i.e., Music, Art), family members, paraprofessionals, special education professionals, healthcare and related service providers.

All webinars are offered two times on the day scheduled:

2:00pm – 2:45pm MT / 3:00pm – 3:45pm CT

3:30pm – 4:15pm MT / 4:30pm – 5:15pm CT

To register, select calendar and search date. Click on Survey Monkey link to complete registration for each webinar. <http://ksdetasn.org/>

Five Part Series: The Elements of Structured Teaching

Dec 16: The Principles of Structured Teaching

Presented by Mary Flory, M.S. Ed.

Jan 13: Physical Structure and Overall Classroom Schedules

Presented by Mary Woodworth, Ed.S.

Jan 20: Assessing Schedules and Work Systems

Mary Woodworth, Ed.S.

Jan 27: Teaching Routines & Strategies

Presented by Mary Flory, M.S. Ed. & Mary Woodworth, Ed.S.

Feb 3: Visual Structure of Tasks

Presented by Mary Flory, M.S. Ed. & Mary Woodworth, Ed.S.

Tri-State Webinar: Catatonia and Autism (two part series)

February 10: Catatonia and Autism

Presented by Ruth Aspy, Ph.D. & Barry Grossman, Ph.D.

February 17: Catatonia and Autism

Presented by Ruth Aspy, Ph.D. & Barry Grossman, Ph.D.

TASN ATBS Webinar

January 8: Early Child Case Study 3 12:00-12:45

Presented by Lindy McDaniel, M.S.Ed.

<http://ksdetasn.org/events>



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Tips for Being an Effective Communication Partner/Assistant by Pam Sharping, M.Ed., BCBA

Communication difficulties and problem behaviors are correlated (Macil, Conroy, Nakao, & Alter 2006). Functional communication skills aid self-expression and reduce problem behavior and communication breakdowns (ASHA, National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities). Committed communication partners and assistants are able to train individuals with ASD critical communication skills. Communication partners are those the child interacts with in any environment (e.g., family, friends, professionals). If the child with ASD uses an augmentative or alternative mode of communication (AAC), the partner speaks directly to the child utilizing this mode of communication in the exchange. Communication assistants help children interact successfully and independently. In schools this is a Para educator or teacher. At home and in the community it is a family member. Communication assistants support the interaction by prompting the AAC user and helping them form appropriate messages (DynaVox Mayer-Johnson).

Tips for Being An Effective Communication Partner/Assistant:

1. All staff, family, and FRIENDS should be trained to be fluent in the child's mode of communication. Children with ASD talk to staff and parents most frequently when using AAC and rarely to interact with peers. Friendships with peers are difficult when the peers don't know how to communicate with the child.
2. "Good" communication partners are patient, motivated, interested and comfortable with all methods of communication.
3. Expect communication. Neither the communication partner nor the communication assistant ever talks for the AAC user. Wait and allow the child to be independent. Follow a prompt hierarchy established by the SLP or communication programmer. Fade out prompts as needed.
4. An assistant not sure what the child is communicating should ask for compensatory strategies (e.g., can you spell it, show me something similar, etc.). When understood, assist them (e.g., gesturing to where it is located). Be persistent and don't get between the communication partner and the child. This is the child's conversation. Play a supportive role.
5. Collaborate with the SLP/programmer to expand the student's vocabulary and communication. Contact the SLP/programmer immediately if something is broken or missing.

6. Use modeling to teach language and reinforce communication. When working with a student, talk about what you're doing too (self-talk). When on a break with a student, discuss what they are doing (parallel talk). If a student is playing with a toy, say, "You are bouncing the ball." Finally, expand their language. If a student says, "That is a dog," expand on the utterance, "That is a BIG RED dog."
7. Teach communication skills in natural settings to increase generalization.
8. Take advantage of each spontaneous communication opportunity as it arises.
9. Reinforce, reinforce, reinforce. The response effort for the child to use their AAC must be easier than exhibiting their problem behavior. Initially, make it very simple to gain access to reinforcement.
10. If the student uses AAC to communicate, make sure it is in close proximity (arms distance away). Speech generated devices, communication books, and communication aides are often not readily accessible for the child. This absence leads to a reversion to old behaviors. Back up communication boards, communication books, and other visual supports should be available in case the child doesn't have their system with them. If possible, go back to retrieve the system. It takes commitment from all involved to teach the child that their voice has meaning.

References:

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