

It takes a team

With the incidence rate of autism being 1 in 68, many speech language pathologists are serving students with autism. While this may at times seem like a daunting and overwhelming task, know that when we work together as a team, we can make great things happen!

A majority of students with autism have a team of professionals with whom they interact with on a regular basis. These team members may include but are not limited to the following: intervention specialists, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, board certified behavior analysts, paraprofessionals, job coaches and parents. While each individual has a specialty area, when we work together, we can help our students make more progress and become more effective and confident communicators. Below are some tips to follow to help initiate and maintain this collaborative process.

1. Get to know each member of the student's team. This may seem like an easy one, but often times we are so busy serving an array of different students that we don't allow ourselves to focus on things of this nature. This is the first step in building successful relationships with other team members. For example, if you are a public school therapist and your student has a private speech therapist, get permission to speak with them. It is always insightful to hear about how your student is doing in other environments.
2. Knowledge is power! Share with team members what your student's communication based goals are. If your student is working closely with a paraprofessional or a team of paraprofessionals, they need to know what the

- IEP objectives include. This will make them feel more confident and effective when working on these skills with the student.
3. Reinforce paraprofessionals or one on one instructors for all of the hard work that they do with students. This is a challenging position and one that sometimes gets overlooked. People like to hear that they are doing a great job for students!
 4. Try to fit in time to collaborate or co- treat with other members of the team. If scheduling allows have the paraprofessional or one on one instructor stay for all or a portion of your session, so that you can model ways to work on communication throughout the day. If the student has an OT or PT, try to co – treat so that you can learn and brainstorm together. Often times, so many things that we work on can be done so more effectively when we look at student goals together as a team. Does your student work with a board certified behavior analyst? If so, try to talk with or work with the student during the same time. Behavior and communication are so interrelated that often times collaborating together helps our student’s make quicker progress with increasing communication and decreasing maladaptive behavior.
 5. Create a daily data sheet that captures progress with current communication targets. If you have a student who is limited verbally and working on increasing the ability to request wanted items or actions, a data sheet that captures their requests throughout the course of the day is powerful data to have. It could like this:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Student will use verbalizations or sign language to request wanted items or actions.	Independent requests: (Tally here)
	Prompted requests: (Tally here)

Or if you have a student who is working on answering personal information questions, you could have the one on one instructor or teacher capture data with a + or -.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
What is your phone number? + -	What is your address? + -	How do you get to school? + -	What is your phone number? + -	How do you get to school? + -

Please fill this out daily. If (student) answers the question correctly circle +. If he needs to practice it more circle -. Return to SLP on Friday. Thanks a bunch!! 😊

Dates: Week of _____

I hope that you can use these guidelines to help your work with students with autism become more systematic and collaborative. Go team, go!

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