



DEPARTMENT:

FACULTY SPONSOR:

STUDENT(S):

PROJECT TITLE:



# Autism in the Classroom

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# What is Autism?



- A developmental disability characterized by extreme withdrawal and communication difficulties.
- Autism is a spectrum disorder
  - A child's symptoms can be present in a wide variety of combinations from mild to severe.
- Symptoms:
  - Social communication challenges
  - Restricted, repetitive behaviors
- Asperger's is a form of autism

# Signs of Autism

- **6 months**
  - Few or no big smiles or other warm, joyful and engaging expressions
  - Limited or no eye contact
- **9 months**
  - Little or no back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles or other facial expression
- **12 months**
  - Little or no babbling
  - Little or no back-and-forth gestures such as pointing, showing, reaching or waving
  - Little or no response to name
- **16 months**
  - Very few or no words

# Signs of Autism (cont.)

- 24 months
  - Very few or no meaningful, two-word phrases (not including imitating or repeating)
- At any age
  - Loss of previously acquired speech, babbling or social skills
  - Avoidance of eye contact
  - Persistent preference for solitude
  - Difficulty understanding other people's feelings
  - Delayed language development
  - Persistent repetition of words or phrases (echolalia)
  - Resistance to minor changes in routine or surroundings
  - Restricted interests
  - Repetitive behaviors (flapping, rocking, spinning, etc.)
  - Unusual and intense reactions to sounds, smells, tastes, textures, lights and/or colors

# What Causes Autism?



- Genetics
- Environment
  - Advanced parent age
  - Pregnancy and birth complications
- Prenatal vitamins (low risk)
- NOT vaccines
- Differences in brain biology

# How is Autism Diagnosed?

## *Six or more of the following:*

- Poor eye contact, lack of responsiveness, inability to establish relationships
- No formal spoken language, robotic sounding speech with little tone inflection, use of made-up gibberish words, and repeating exactly what has been heard

## *Stereotypical behavior*

- Body rocking, hand flapping, or fascination with objects or specific parts of objects

## *Onset before age 3*

- The child must not meet criteria for Rett Syndrome of childhood disintegrative disorder, in which loss of skills is reported before age 3.

# My Student - Ari

- Kindergarten
- Leaves the class at least 2-3 times a day for speech, behavior and special needs
- Participates in class as much as she can with help from teachers
- During work time, spends a lot of one on one time with kindergarten assistant
- Repeats the same phrase throughout the day
- Very little communication and very hard to understand
- Can write letters with help and tracing but can't read



Narrow focus

Language  
development  
issues

Poor  
nonverbal  
skills

Narrow  
interests

Attention  
issues

# **How Autism Affects Students in the Classroom**

# Working with Students with Autism



Don't let the behavior overwhelm you.

Develop a behavior management plan.



Communicate to the student's parents and other teachers.

Find out what works and what doesn't work for the student.



Systematically expect more and more of the student.

At first, students may not participate at all but overtime they may acquire increased participation.



Develop a picture and word schedule for daily activities.

Use pictures and drawings to represent activities that will occur during the day.



Use peers to help redirect the student's behavior.

Classmates can help promote appropriate behavior and praise students for his/her accomplishments.



Take ownership of the student.

Every child in your class is your responsibility and you are entrusted with their education and well-being.

# Other Techniques for Teaching Students with Autism



Use simple, concrete language



Give limited and clear choices



Be gentle in criticism



Applied behavior analysis



Be aware of sensory problems



Positive reinforcement

# Ways to Help as a Parent

- Begin early intervention
  - Start therapies at an early age
    - Speech, behavior, occupational, music therapy
- Talk to your child during routine activities
  - Engage and interact whenever possible
- Create opportunities for your child to interact with you, and others
- Encourage your child to try new things and celebrate even small accomplishments
  - Use rewards to motivate your child

# Can Autism be Treated?

There are no treatments to cure autism but several interventions

## Types of intervention:

- Behavior and communication approaches
- Dietary approaches
- Medication
- Complimentary and alternative medicine

# Facts About Autism

Autism can affect any child.

- As many as one in 110 children have autism.

There is no known cause of autism.

- Vaccines DO NOT cause autism.

There is no cure for autism.

- Early interventions and therapies can treat autism but it is not curable.

# Activity

- You have a student in your classroom with autism who doesn't show any interest in school and other students in your class are distracted by his/her behaviors. This student has very little communication skills and doesn't seem to understand you when you give direction/speak. What is something you can do as a teacher to still help this student learn as well as prevent/help other students from getting distracted?

# References

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