



AUTISM CLASSROOM RESOURCES PODCAST EPISODE 35: SUPPORT INSTRUCTION AT HOME

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Welcome back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast and thanks for joining me today. As I record this, many schools are going into their 5th, 6th or 7th week of homeschooling, distance learning, whatever we are calling it these days. And while I think (and I hope) that the burden is getting easier for both educators and families, I think it's starting to wear on everyone.

The Struggle is Real


I know that families are struggling with behavior, balancing their own work with their children's work, trying to motivate students to engage with them as instructors, or just feeling at a loss about what to do to keep their child's learning going.

I know that educators are struggling trying to make sure that what they are providing is meeting those needs as best they can. They are sad because they miss their students and their students miss them. Educators are dealing with all new technology and a whole new way of planning. And with so little time to prepare for this, they are trying to make sure that students have what they need, in a situation in which they can't meet all their needs the way they could in the classroom.

Good Enough is Good Enough

So, I want to start by saying to families and to educators that this is not going to be perfect. No one expects you to be perfect. And we need to embrace the "unperfectness" of it all and get through it. I talked in [episode 32](#) of some coping strategies for both educators and families and it might be worthwhile to revisit that episode now.

In addition to practicing all the coping strategies that we teach to our students to deal with stressful situations, we also can brainstorm some ways to integrate instruction into daily routine for families. Let's face it, our



families had their children in school...they weren't homeschooling (unless you are a family who was homeschooling...in which case this will apply as well).

That means that fitting instruction into their day can be tough. Especially since many parents are working from home and others are still working outside the home. This is a long time to be trying to balance everything. So to me, one of the most natural ways for families to teach and assure that students don't lose their skills is to fold the skills into natural activities we would do at home.

I've heard from many of you, as well, that some of our students are not really enthused about having school work at home. Some engage in challenging behavior when presented with new material. Integrating naturalistic instruction into the day may help to get around that issue as well.

Naturalistic Instruction at Home


So what is naturalistic instruction at home? It's building number skills into playing games. It's building reading into cooking dinner. It's following a template to set the table. And it's turn-taking with a family member in a simple game.

What skills get targeted are obviously dependent upon the student. It's the perfect time to practice life skills. And it's always a good time to target language, communication and social skills.

To help with that, this episode focuses on 3 ways that instruction can be embedded into daily routines for families. And 3 ways that educators can help with that process. So let's get started.

Instruction at Home: Embedding Into Routines

Let's start with ways to embed instruction into home routines. I've talked about this a bit in [Episode 31](#) when I talked about distance learning. But I thought I'd be a bit more specific in this episode about ways to do this. And there are some freebies in our [resource library](#) and videos below to help with it as well. You can find those below.



In addition, I will be sharing some additional videos and cheat sheets in the [Special Educator Academy](#) this week to help you help families integrate this type of learning into their daily routine. So if you aren't a member, you might want to give us a try. We have a number of workshops on distance learning as well as downloadable tutorials to send home to families. So, [hop over and get your free trial at specialeducatoracademy.com](#)

I. Functional Skills in Instruction at Home

One of the easiest ways to build learning into daily routines is to focus on teaching life skills around the house. At school we often would do this with task analyses and very highly structured instruction. While students respond well to this, sometimes generalization outside of our training environment can be difficult. Well, here's the silver lining (if you can call it that) of instruction at home. No generalization immediately needed. Granted you will need to generalize the skills when the student lives outside their family home. But for now, it's about integrating the learning into household routines.

Family Tip

Families, this means that when you are folding the laundry, give your child a few items to fold. Show him or her how to fold them--model it for them. Then have them do it. Guide their hands if needed and then gradually let them do it more on their own.

Other activities they could do with you include cleaning the table, setting the table, clearing the table of dishes after a meal, counting out utensils, setting the table, and doing common household chores like dusting or wiping the counter.

You could even use your phone to make a quick video of you doing a task. That way your child could watch it whenever they need it without you having to remodel. And video modeling sometimes works better for our students because they can rewatch it as needed. If you've watched any tech tutorials recently about how to use Zoom or other apps online, I'm betting you have rewound a few times. I know I have.



Educator Tips

Teachers, you would also send home videos of these common tasks for the student. This was one of the ideas I shared in [Episode 33](#) that paraprofessionals might be able to do. If they could record some of these videos if they are working, that would be a great thing to send home.

In addition, it might be helpful to make the family a task analysis of the skills they are working on. These can be with or without pictures. If you want to send it by pictures, send via Google Slides and they can share it on their phones or tablets. This way they will always be using consistent steps for the students.

2. Using Games for Instruction at Home

Games are a great way to encourage language and social skills. They also provide the opportunity to practice math skills and even reading skills.

Scavenger Hunts


I talked in [Episode 31](#) about scavenger hunts and you can still download those in my [free resource library](#) (I'll put the link in the show notes). Those are great ways to find common items around the house or in the yard and talk about them to build language skills.

I Spy

I Spy is another great game for building language. You can do it by describing things in the environment or get a set number of items to choose from. Practice taking turns by the child describing (I spy) and the parent guessing and then vice versa. This is a great way to work on language, observation, and helping others see what you are seeing (i.e., perspective taking).

Board and Card Games

Play board games or card games to work on turn taking, being a good winner and/or loser, and to work on counting. With board games, have them roll the dice and count. Count the spaces they move up and down the board or count



the number of cards dealt out. You can even work on multiplication (each person needs 4 cards and there are 4 players--how many cards are you dealing?). And division (you dealt 8 cards to 2 people...how many did each get?).

BINGO

BINGO is always a good one that you can use for matching. Picture bingo cards or bingo cards made for matching letters or sight words are a good way to practice identifying items in a fun way.

The Hokey Pokey

This is a great game for practicing recognizing body parts, following directions, and just getting some movement into the day. There are some visuals in the resource library as well that I've put on Google Slides that you can access for families to use to play. I'll put the link to that in the show notes as well.

Simon Says


This is a quick easy way to practice listening, improving impulse control and executive functioning, and following directions.

The Questions Game

I'll put a video of how to play this in the blog post for this episode. Essentially this is just writing questions out on paper, popsicle sticks, Jenga blocks or anything else. You take turns with the students asking and answering questions. I walk through this in one of my Quick Tip Tuesdays so I'll put that video in the post.

Magical Mystery Bag

In this game you just put common objects in a pillow case and your student can draw one out. Then ask questions about it or have them tell you something about it. So they pull out a pen. It's purple, you write with it, it



goes with paper are all things they could say. I'll put a video in the blog post with this one from a Quick Tip Tuesday as well.

Cooking

Finally, cooking is another great activity at home that you can use to embed learning into regular routines. I have [a cooking activity](#) in my store that has distance learning review tools and picture recipes ([that I will put a link to in the blog post](#)). But in general, when cooking, you can have students

- Identify ingredients
- Identify cooking utensils (by getting them out for you)
- Measure ingredients
- Read the recipe
- Follow directions (stir, pour, etc.)
- Learn about science of heat, turning water into gas by boiling it, etc.
- Practice safety skills like learning the stove is hot
- Motor activities like stirring, pouring etc.
- And recall what was made once it's finished

You could cook for meals or have a special cooking activity one day a week to make a simple recipe.

Educators Tips

So those are some tips for families. Let me share some ideas for educators on tools and supports they can share with the home to make it work.

Brainstorm Goals Matched to Activities

Sit down and brainstorm ideas for the student's goals and where they might fit into the everyday life at home. Obviously if they are working on advanced calculus, maybe not. But many of our students are working on skills that they need to use everyday. So, how could they do that?



Make a List of Targeted Goals with Activities

Based on the skills being targeted with the student, make the parents a list of potential games or home activities into which they can embed those skills. Working on counting? Think about things that happen around the house that students could count. Working on requesting? Do a quick list of things the student could request at mealtime or during play or a game. This list with ideas will help families immensely because I think all of our heads are kind of spinning. And for many of them, they may not have thought of these things. Plus, more ideas are always better. 😊

Make Videos

Make videos of how to play the game while facilitating language, turn taking and other communication skills. I talked in [episode 33](#) of the podcast about what paraprofessionals can be doing to help classes during this time and one suggestion was that they could make peer modeling videos if they had the tech and were OK with doing that. Other members of the team could also make videos to send home. You can make the videos with your phone with a child (if you have one and are OK with that) or just walking them through how to do it.

So, I hope that these provide some ideas for ways to fold learning into the day without having it be super stressful. These are very stressful times, and the last thing we need to do is stress out students and families additionally.

If you have ideas for incorporating learning into natural routines at home, I would love to hear about them in the [Free Facebook group at specialeducatorsconnection.com](#).

And, if you are a member of the [Special Educator Academy](#), check this week for videos coming your way to share with families on these types of skills along with some printable/distance tools to use. And if you are not a member, hop over to [specialeducatoracademy.com](#) to start your free trial.

Finally, thanks so much for taking the time to join me today. I appreciate your time and if there are topics you would like to see covered, just drop me a line!