

# ACR 150 final Draft

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Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast, the podcast for special educators who are looking for personal and professional development.

I'm your host, Dr. Christine Reeve. For more than 20 years, I've worn lots of hats and special education. But my real love is helping special educators like you. This podcast will give you tips and ways to implement research based practices in a practical way in your classroom, to make your job easier and more effective.

Welcome back to the Autism Classroom Resources podcast. I am Chris Reeve. And we have been talking about how the CORE model of systems within your classroom can free you up to do more direct instruction, to have more time on your own to do more planning, all sorts of different things.

And the key really is setting up the systems ahead of time. And one of the things that we want to think about the system being part of is our instruction. We want to make sure that we're giving our instruction in a way that is predictable and regular and is following best practice.

So we need to create systems for our actual instruction within this model, as well. And that is what I'm going to talk about today. So let's get started.

So in the CORE model, there are elements that we use to allow teachers to implement the instruction, because they're no longer managing the adults, for instance. But it's also really important that we've got some consistency in the way that we're actually administering instruction.

So let's start by just talking for a little bit about the characteristics of strong instructional programs.

So when we think about the way we present information, whether it's reading or math or any other type of skills - social skills - behavioral skills - we're working first on acquisition of the skill so

type of skills, social skills, behavioral skills, we're working first on acquisition of the skill, so introducing a new skill that is not in the student's repertoire, so that we are getting enough practice for the student to acquire a brand new skill. And that's where we're usually using our prompts and fading our prompts. And we're probably wanting to be pretty consistent in the way that we're presenting our instruction itself.

Next up, we want to work on fluency. As the student becomes more accurate and independent at giving those responses for the task and getting the right answers, then we want to work on them being able to do it fluently.

So whether it is a vocabulary lesson for speaking that they can call the vocabulary up and answer a question or ask a question. Or it's a writing assignment and they're fluent at writing their sentences. Or it's a math assignment and they can fluently do their multiplication tables.

All of those are things that we want to make sure the student's skill isn't just acquired, but is actually used in an easy manner. Think about reading as a good example. That's something we talk about a lot when we talk about fluency that you want the student to be able to read, but you also want the student to be able to read faster, because the longer it takes him to read, the more painstaking the effort is to read, the longer anything he needs to use reading to learn is going to take.

So as we move forward, we want to look at fluency. Fluency is a really great thing to schedule for instance, into paraprofessionals centers. That's typically material that you have initially taught. It is material that you have done the initial acquisition, data instruction, and then you can move it to a practice center or para center, and sometimes even independent work, as long as the student has mastered the task as a way of building fluency.

We want them to get used to using that skill quickly and easily. That's a true sense of mastery of the skill.

But the next step we also want to think about which is especially for our students with autism spectrum, that's where we really need to think about can the student generalize this skill or this knowledge from this situation to a completely different situation where we haven't taught the skill.

So we want to make sure that they can generalize their skill to new materials to working with a different adult. Again, another really good opportunity for para. To do a different materials we often would do in independent work. To do it with different directions and to use elements of the instruction that are not like the initial acquisition structure.

Now, most of our students who need explicit instruction need a lot of repetition. So one of the things I talk a lot about is the fact that we want, when we're planning it out in our teaching implementation

one a lot about is the fact that we want, when we're planning it out in our teaching implementation plan, we want to make sure that our primary teaching activity for a skill is something where they can get multiple opportunities to practice the skill and I go for a minimum of five.

That's not because you have to have five, it's because we know if we have five data points, we've got some information to make problem solving with. If we have one data point, we don't.

Similarly, we know that most of our students need more than one opportunity to practice a skill every once in a while. They're not always going to pick up these skills that need explicit instruction without a lot of repetition.

I think of it a lot like you know been using for the CORE model we've been using, you have to strengthen your core. The same is true with instruction. You want to set up strength training sessions, because just hoping that when he is cleaning his house, he's going to actually build muscle is probably not a good physical training protocol. It's why people lift weights. It's why people use flexi bands and all sorts of things like that.

And if we don't practice those skills, we lose that strength. The same is true for our students and learning new skills. They need strength training. They need times where we're specifically practicing that skill. But we need to make sure that as soon as they begin to get that skill, we start to shift how we present it so they don't only learn it in that one narrowly defined little situation. We want to make sure that we are teaching them something so that they can use it in the environment they're in.

So if I'm teaching him how to use the grocery store, eventually we're going to need to go to the grocery store and make sure he can use these skills in that situation. It's different to give money to a clerk I don't know versus a para that I do.

So we need to think about how we set up our teaching programs. Before we start teaching them. There's a couple of things that we can do that can help with that.

One is that we always use consistent methods for instruction. So we have a set of tools and we pull from them as needed. Another is to make sure that when you are teaching a skill, whether it's a self help skill, a language, skill, an academic skill, have a written program of instruction.

If you use a curriculum, chances are good you have a program of the scaffolding of the skills. Many of our students need those skills broken down even smaller. And the problem of not having a written teaching plan, just relying on it being in your head, is twofold.

The first is, since we're talking about efficiency and stress release, if I have to think about the steps, they're taking up space in my brain, that I need to be focused on the other things going on in the classroom. Whereas if I have a written program, I don't have to remember them. So it's just a little less cognitive load that makes it a little bit easier.

The other piece is that the way that I do the task and the way that someone else in my classroom does the task may not be exactly the same. So maybe when I wash my hands, I turn the water off while I'm rubbing the soap on my hands and then I turn the water back on. And maybe you don't do that step. For our students that need very consistent instruction, that's going to be kind of confusing, that sometimes we do it one way and sometimes we do it another way.

If this was a skill that I was really concerned that they needed to be able to do it in a flexible way, then eventually I might introduce those variables to them. But given them I would say almost every single one of us washes our hands in the same way every single time, I don't think that's something that needs flexibility so it's not something I'm going to spend my time working on flexibility of following the steps, but I am going to work on varying my instruction, for example.

So maybe first I say hey, go wash your hands. And then I say you know once he gets out, oh, your hands are dirty. Or don't forget, and I might start changing up the way I asked something so that he learns to respond to different situations.

Similarly, it might just be that I stop asking. And I give the unspoken expectation that when he comes out of the bathroom stall, he's going to wash his hands. So that becomes part of the chain of behavior that he learns and it doesn't require me to be there at all.

So, however we're going to do it, we want to make sure that we're consistent. And we want to make sure that the people that are doing it are consistent. So having a written program becomes very important.

And the final thing that we really want to do is make sure, as I said, that we're building for generalization. So that's where we start working on different directions.

That's where we start working on having him do it in a different bathroom, having him go to a different grocery store, having him have a different cashier at the grocery store, so that he is being exposed to other situations. And A- we're finding out whether or not he has generalized his skill to that new situation, and B-if he hasn't, then we know we need to go back and teach it with some more examples.

So we want to make sure that we're setting up our programs to help our students be as consistent as

possible, and generalize their skills. So for instance, many years ago, we used to teach students to look at me as a way of any eye contact. We don't do that anymore. It's not really helpful. It's been traumatic for some adults with autism are recounting how it was traumatic when they were young.

One of the things that I discovered very early on, though, was that saying, "Look at me," was probably not our best choice for giving directions.

I was in a kindergarten class with a student with really severe autism that we had been working with. He had a lot of issues with generalization, he learned things exactly as you presented them. So you really had to work at deferring things so that he would get the hang of it.

First, you wanted to present it consistently. So that's where that teaching program comes in, then we can start to vary what we're doing a little bit to build in that generalization. But what happened with him was, I began to realize that, "Look at me," is not something that general ed teachers say.

So the kindergarten teacher told everybody to line up and of course, my kid didn't line up, because he didn't recognize that a direction given to the whole group without his name in the front of it was a direction given to him.

So she said, "Okay, everybody line up," again, he doesn't line up. And so then she's, you know, starting to get a little aggravated now. And she's like, "Okay, everybody who's still in their seats needs to go line up," and he doesn't move. And finally, she goes over, she says his name, you need to go line up. And because he's, she's not right in front of him yet, he doesn't like attend to that. And he's confused by now.

And finally, she walks over, and she looks at him and she says, "Look at me, you need to go line up at the door." And it occurred to me that what we had taught him to do, was to respond to a direction when somebody said, "Look at me," not when a direction was given to a group or even a direction was given with his name.

And because of that, essentially, I had taught him a skill to greatly frustrate every teacher he would have, until we untaught this skill and taught it again. So talk about something that's inefficient when we have to unteach something and teach it again, it's a whole different thing.

So one of the things we shifted to was the idea that, you know, if teachers are more likely to say the kid's name, when he doesn't follow a direction, that's what we should be using as our extra prompt. And eventually, we want to fade that out. But don't use, "Look at me," use calling his name, because that is a more natural response that we see in the adults.

So again, I want everybody in the class to be on board with knowing that as well. So we're all teaching it in the same way.

So checklists are another good thing you can use with instruction systems. I talked about them a little bit last week. And they're a good way to help people see what they need to do. You know, they're asking the question, they're recording the data, what do they do with the data when the data is full? Those kinds of things are good things for checklists.

But a teaching program can also be a checklist of did we do this, this, this, this and this. And that can assure that we're being efficient in our instruction, until we get to the point where we need to make sure that we are varying what we're doing a little bit more.

So I hope that that gives you some good things to think about. I would love to hear from you. What you think of as good systems for providing instruction within your classroom.

I often think of a system of instruction, as I'm going to teach it in my small group, then I'm going to move it to a para center, and then I'm going to move it to either independent work system, or maybe to a large group activity, depending on what the skill is. If it's a language skill, probably the large group activity. If it is a hands on fine motor task, maybe it goes to independent work.

But that gives me my place where I'm teaching them initial acquisition, then we do practice, then we do independent or generalization. And by doing that, we've got a set system that I know the instruction is going to go through. So I know what skills I'm going to start with, and when I'm going to hand them off to the next person. And when they're going to be ready to hand it off to the next phase. That takes the decision making out of a lot of the instructional pieces.

I'd love to have your ideas about what works for you all. So definitely come and share in our Facebook group at [specialeducatorsconnection.com](https://www.facebook.com/specialeducatorsconnection).

I would also really love it if you like this podcast and you have been listening, please go over to your podcast platform and leave me a review. It would be greatly appreciated. I really appreciate your feedback. I appreciate your interest. So if this is something that is really helpful for you. Please come let me know so that I can continue to do it.

Thank you so much for listening. I know your time is so incredibly valuable, but I hope you'll come back next week for another episode along how to make your classroom more efficient. Bye, guys.

