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Welcome back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. I'm Chris Reeve. And for the past few weeks, we have been talking about the CORE framework and CORE stands for classroom organization results in efficiency.

Now, last week in Episode 151, I talked about setting up systems to share expectations and duties with staff in the classroom. But just telling people what they need to do isn't training them how to do it. And that's where this episode comes in.

So today, I'm going to talk about how to make training paraprofessionals in the classroom work. I talked in Episode 23, about training classroom staff. And I gave some tips there that will overlap a little bit. But that episode really touches on how we train staff, what strategies we use, what type of training they need. And so that part of it, I'm not going to cover as much today. But you can find that episode at autismclassroomresources.com/episode 23.

Today's five tips are going to be about how you use your CORE systems to allow you to actually provide that training to your staff. I know that most of you have no time with the staff without students to even collaborate and talk. So these tips are going to focus on how we train staff in that situation when we have a strong CORE. So let's get started.

Now, as I said, we face a number of challenges with training staff in a special ed situation. Inclusion staff, for instance, who support your students out in general ed, they might not ever be in your actual physical classroom. You have a full caseload in your classroom, and you can't push out to get to those staff to train them.

Your hands are full with your students, even when you are there with all of the staff in your classroom, you're teaching every minute of the day. So there isn't any time to step away and really provide that training when they're in the room. And as I said earlier, most of the time staff does not

have child free or duty free time. So that becomes an issue that you don't have time to even collaborate, much less train.

So here are five ways that you can fit training in with your CORE strategies in place.

The first is to run a what I call a "one man down" program. Now you might do this for a full day or a part of the day. But essentially a one man down plan is when you run the classroom as if someone was absent.

And if you have strong CORE systems in place, you have a plan for that. And if you don't have a plan for that, in two weeks, I will have an episode that will focus specifically on how you do that and I also have a blog post about it. So I will put the blog post link in this episode's show notes. And you can find that at autismclassroomresources.com/episode 152.

Now, if you're using a one man down plan, then you have the ability to step back and free yourself up to go and do some modeling for the staff, or free the staff up to come and watch you, or free yourself up to go give them feedback on how they're handling a behavior or instruction or things like that.

You don't have to run it for the full day. Maybe at the beginning of the year, when you first start it you run it every other week for just a set of centers. But it gives you a really good opportunity to free yourself up to actually demonstrate and do some of the types of training that staff needs in order to be able to actually implement what we want them to implement.

You can also take a day that the staff is all there but students are absent and use that time to do some training. So rearrange the schedule with those students missing and then allow yourself to step back and do some training or allow yourself to push in and do some more laying our observation. So I'll talk all about how we do that in a couple of weeks and how we set up that plan.

But while it's not ideal that we necessarily want to run our classroom without all the staff we have, because I know it's not like you're having an overabundance of staff, I know that you already feel that you're short staffed, it does allow you to make sure that the staff that you have, are well trained in what you want them to do.

And so I will take backing off and doing say maintenance tasks a little bit for part of the day so that we can actually get some training in so for the long term, the staff is better trained.

The second thing that you can do to make training work is to have someone else in the room, run a group activity, so that you can stand back and observe how things are going in other areas, and how

group activity, so that you can stand back and observe how things are going in other areas, and how you can provide support and modeling and prompting and feedback to your staff.

So you could do this just by having another staff member run a group activity that you usually run. But you could also arrange for related service providers to come in for a period of time during the day, one or two days a week. So for instance, I used to work with a classroom that the speech and the OT came once a week and ran a cooking lesson. That was part of their therapy time and that freed up a staff member, gave the teacher some planning time, and she was able to use it to train that staff member. And that allows you to have that time to do that.

Number three, you can use video modeling. So instead of doing all of your training, live and hands on, you could make quick videos of you implementing a strategy with a student, and then share that with the staff members, when there's any kind of break or moment that they would be able to watch it.

Now if you're going to do this, obviously, you have to make sure that you have permission to take the videos. And I will be wary about unnecessarily sending the videos to the staffs personal phones if there are students involved. But you can do this with, if you have permission from the families, where you can actually demonstrate with this particular student. Because we can find a bunch of YouTube videos that demonstrate a strategy.

But sometimes it's hard to really understand that it's going to be effective until you see someone use it with the students that you work with. I think it's a much more powerful way to present it so that it isn't just, "Yeah, that might work for somebody else."

And I say this as somebody who frequently had staff come down and observe classrooms and then say, well, of course, you know, your kids are good. So that's why these strategies work. It's like, no the kids are good because the strategies work. And then having to go to those people's districts and set it up with their students for them to believe that the strategies would be effective for their students, that there wasn't a difference in the kind of students we were working with.

So I do think that those real life examples can be really useful. So I think those are something that can be really helpful. You can also use video to give staff some background about why you're asking them to do what you're asking them to do.

So you could use a video that you've made just giving them a rundown on why you chose a specific behavioral strategy for a student, just turn on your phone and record a short video. But you can also use established videos and one of the examples might be the 30 behavior videos that are available in our free resource library. So I'll make sure that that link is in the post for this episode as well.

And next week, I'm actually going to talk about a lot of tools that you can use for this type of

And next week, I'm actually going to talk about a lot of tools that you can use for this type of background training, and even some video modeling resources and where you can find them. So make sure to tune into that as well.

You can also use checklists. And checklists are a matter of letting the staff know what the expectation is, but also letting you know if they're following the steps. So if it's just a matter of setting up something and completing a task, then it might just be a checklist of steps like a checklist to reset the independent work systems.

But if it's a teaching strategy or a behavior strategy, then you might use a kind of checklists that we often call a competency based checklist. It's a fancy name for a checklist that basically just has the steps of a procedure that you want someone to follow. I don't use them for supervision or accountability tools in this situation. I did when I ran the supervision program for behavior analysts, but in a classroom situation I use them as a learning tool.

So I want to show them the steps that I'm expecting them to do before I train them to do it, or before I show them the video, and then we use it, to let them know what we're looking for when we do an observation. And we can use it as a way to give objective feedback about what steps are working and where the problems might be.

So it just makes for really clear communication. And it helps them know again, what is expected, but it also leads you through the steps that you want to train on. You can also, as part of this process, ask them for their input on competency based checklists about how it might need to be tweaked in their specific situation or their experience with it. So you can have them use it to give you feedback about what works or what doesn't with this strategy, so that you can discuss it.

Now, I don't have a lot of competency based checklists available for free. But we do have a whole quick win with examples in the Special Educator Academy. So if training your staff is something that you're struggling with, it's a really great place to get a ton of resources on this topic. We also have videos that you can download to share with your staff on specific training topics. So I actually walked through it.

And sometimes it's just helpful to have them hear it from somebody else that maybe they might consider an expert. I'm not sure I consider myself an expert. But sometimes it's just nice for people to hear someone besides the direct boss say it.

And I'll give you the long and short version of why that's important. I was an administrator and a program consultant came in, was giving feedback to the staff and then like, and they're looking at him like this is brand new information that they've never heard before and I had been telling them that for like six months, and so I was very embarrassed. I was very young administrator.

And so I went to him and I said, "I'm really, really sorry. I have been telling them the same things but when you tell it to them, it's like they've never heard it before." And he looked at me and he said, "Chris, that's because I flew in on an airplane. And that made me special."

And I have to tell you that as a consultant, I've used that many, many times when I know that the classroom teacher or the Autism Specialist has been telling the staff these things, and they're looking at me like, oh my gosh, this is such an amazing suggestion. I've never heard this before. I know it's because I flew in on an airplane and that's what made me special.

So just know that know that sometimes it's useful to have somebody backing you up but it doesn't mean that you're not doing what you need to do.

And finally, number five is model for the staff and point out those models as you are doing them or right before after. So step in, offer to help. If you see that something is working, take an extra minute and say let me show you what I did. I always step in, if there's a problem, and I don't say let me show you what to do.

Instead, I say, let me see if something works. Because that way, I'm not telling them that what they're doing is wrong, I'm offering them another opportunity. But I'm also letting them know that I might do it and it might not work. Because not everything works 100% of the time.

So you don't want them to think that the strategies and structure go out of the room when you do. So you don't want them to think that you have some kind of magical power where you can swoop in and make the student behave.

So as I said in our last episode, you want to put visuals up of your thinking processes. If you're pulling activities to fill in waiting time, let them see that that's what you're doing. So that hopefully when you're not in the room, they will continue to do that.

So model for the staff what you want them to do, it's more effective than telling them. Telling someone what to do tells them what you expect but it doesn't necessarily show them what it looks like. So modeling, it can be a really powerful tool in the moment, at the time that it's happening.

Now finally, as a bonus, I have an extra strategy. Target one skill at a time. Remember that training is a process. You didn't learn everything about teaching or dealing with behavior all at one time. You didn't walk into one class and learn everything all in one day. You acquired skills over time.

And if you're a first year teacher, you know how overwhelmed you might feel now. If you are a more experienced teacher, you probably remember how overwhelmed you are in your first year. And that is because you haven't learned everything that you've learned later in your career because learning takes time.

So trying to train staff with a firehose of strategies, to get them up to where you want them to be, is going to be a recipe for disaster. Your expectations will be too high, so you will be frustrated. And they will get frustrated, because they're just inundated and overwhelmed.

So instead, list out all the things that you know, the staff need training on and break it down into components. Don't even necessarily say I'm going to train on discrete trials and when we get that I'm going to train on something else. Maybe it's training on one of the five components that make up discrete trials, giving a direction effectively, waiting for a response, using prompting, how do we use reinforcement, those are all processes by themselves.

So break it down into small pieces and prioritize what you're going to teach first. They don't have to know everything at the beginning. They really don't. I know you feel like they do, but they don't.

Start with one or two strategies as those become routine at another and look at it as more of a long term process. I know that's hard to do with staff turnover what it is, but it's going to make a more successful relationship for you with your staff, and a more effective training program.

So those are five options of ways to train staff and an extra hopefully helpful tip about doing it so that they can implement what you need and expect throughout the day with less supervision and support from you. And that gives you more time to focus on actually teaching your students.

Now I would love to hear your thoughts and your ideas. So tag me in a DM on Instagram @autismclassroomresources. I would love to chat with you there. You can also grab your free downloads from the resource library in the post for this episode at autismclassroomresources.com/episode152.

So come back next week and I will be talking about tools for implementing the training strategies that we talked about today. And until then, I hope you have an amazing

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