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SPEAKERS

Chris, Sasha

Chris

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 in 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.

Chris

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources podcast, I am so glad that you've joined us today. I have a very special guest for you, Sasha Long from The Autism Helper is with us today. And she and I got a chance to talk all about one of our favorite topics, which is data collection and analysis in actual classrooms.

Chris

And I really enjoyed talking to Sasha about this because we both come from that classroom background. And she's going to share some really good suggestions about data in general. But she's also going to share some really nice perspective on the state of where we are in teaching and what that means for data collection. So let's get started.

Chris

Hi, everyone, I am so glad that you are joining us for this episode. Sasha Long is here today to talk about data. And we were just laughing that nobody likes to really talk data with me. So I'm always happy to find somebody who finds it as interesting as I do.

Chris

Sasha is a board certified behavior analyst. She was a classroom teacher, and she is the founder and president of The Autism Helper. She does lots and lots of different things, from blogging to podcasts to online courses, as well as I know, she does some professional development as well. So I'm gonna let her introduce herself, and then we'll get to talking about data.

Sasha

Thanks, Chris. Well, that was actually like a very thorough, lovely introduction. So I think you covered a lot of it. I'm a former special education teacher. I'm a board certified behavior analyst. I started The Autism helper to share resources and strategies. We do that in a lot of ways, like you said, blog, podcast, professional development, courses. And I love it and love talking data. So I'm excited to be here.

Chris

Awesome. So you and I've talked about data before on your podcast, and I know that we kind of sometimes look at things in a very similar way. But what are your best tips? I know one of the things that teachers really are struggling with and always have is how do I make data work in the classroom? Like, I know that I have had data, everybody tells me that I have to have data, not a lot of people tell them what that data should look like.

Chris

And, you know, so I'm always looking for good tips on how to help teachers actually make it work while they're actually teaching. There is always one of the people like, you know, if I didn't have to teach the kids, I could do this. And I'm like, yeah, if you didn't teach the kids, we don't need the data. You know? So what are some tips that you have for that?

Sasha

That's a great question. And I really think what I've been talking about a lot lately, is it kind of for everything, for me comes back to reinforcement. And I think if we can really tie in the why to the data. And I think that's a disconnect that a lot of teachers have is, like you said, I know I should take data, but it's so hard. And when we personally don't see the value in something, we don't do it right. We don't make time for it.

Sasha

Like, it's kind of like flossing. Like I floss a lot right before my dentist appointment. Like I have a dentist appointment in a month, I'm gonna floss every day. But you know, if it's not like on my calendar, I'm like, Oh, I could skip it tonight, whatever, because you don't hit that immediate reinforcement for it.

Sasha

And I think with data collection, we're often missing the analysis and the why. So we're doing it because we should, which that's not enough. And then then it's going to be like, well, I gotta I gotta teach and I have these behaviors to deal with. So I'm going to deal with that data later. Because we don't have the value there.

Sasha

And I think in a big picture way, and we can talk about some actionable stuff, too, but in a big picture way if we can connect the why, that leads to so much more consistency, because we're going to be contacting that reinforcement right there so we have that value in that process. Where when you have just the should, it's kind of like, eh, I don't really, I don't really care, whatever, that's fine. Yeah, it's not a

big enough reinforcer when what it's competing with is the needs of our kids sitting right across from us, you know, behaviors, like, there's so many competing contingencies that the should isn't going to be there.

Chris

No, and that's a really good point. I've been talking recently about the fact that when you do analyze and collect your data, it's really important that there's also a feedback loop to the staff. If we want paras to take the data, they have to see why it matters, they have to see how this informs your instruction. Whenever we've created and filled that loop, it's amazing to me that teachers will come back and say, I'm not having any problems with the data anymore. Like because they see why they need it. And they like are like can I see the data? I want to see how he's doing.

Sasha

Yeah, exactly.

Chris

Well, it does become a little bit addictive.

Sasha

Yes. And you know what, like, I think actually the para things awesome that at some point that one of the biggest game changing things I did when I was in the classroom for my paras was give them the mastery criterias and then also give them the skill sequence. Like hey, when we hit mastery on this set, go to this next set. When we hit mastery on this set, go to the next set. Laying that all out for them.

Sasha

Because they now, I mean you get bored working on the same colors after a while, the same letters, the same exemplars. It's like, well, when you hit nine out of 10, on three days, you get to go to the next one. Like, they're not skipping a day of data, because they want to get to that too.

Sasha

And having that, like, kind of whole path written out for them, too, I thought worked out really, really well. Because before I did that, you know, they come to me like, oh, they have mastery criteria. And I was like, Oh, great. I'll get back to you on what to do next, and would immediately forget, because there's a million things going on.

Sasha

And then two weeks later, I'd look over be like, why are they doing puzzles? What are they doing over there? Like, Oh, I forgot to tell them what to work on next. So they see that path to of like, Hey, this is where we're going. It is, like you said, addicting. And it also I think, really brings a lot of value to the role of that paraprofessional. It's like, hey, look what I did. I was the educator, I taught all these skills, we made this progress together.

Chris

Right. And I think that's a really good point, too, when you're building a classroom team, just making sure that we really are all on the same page and have the same page so that we know exactly what we're trying to do. So I think that's a really good point.

Chris

What kind of tips do you have for, like, how do you take data? Like if you're in a small group, how do you easily take data in a classroom?

Sasha

So I think it has to be like the mantras like, you know, if it's not easy, you're not going to do it. So it's the little things matter. And like the devils in the details here. I think you want to think really strategically about what the datasheet looks like, about what the binder looks like. Like silly things like tabs, like having a tab system where the name of the kid, here's Johnny, here's his tab. Flip, go.

Sasha

That two seconds is a game changer on versus like, let me go find this in a busy binder in a clipboard if it's not organized. Like the whole purpose of being organized is that you're going to be efficient, like when those kids are ready to learn, you're ready to teach. And that includes data, like you can't have even 30 seconds to look for the data sheet. It has to be right there.

Sasha

So what what systems what organizational tools can you put into place to lessen that time between your teaching and the data is right there. So I love I like a binder personally because you can have it all tabbed by goal by student and then having the data sheets super simple, where we're doing plus minus or tally whatever types of systems we're using. Rubrics, whatever is all right there.

Sasha

And then really being reasonable with your expectations on yourself of how many kids are taking data on, how often you're doing it. Like, I mean, I probably a little a lot of my repertoire at this point. But like, taking data on multiple kids is really hard to do at once, like in reality. So like, you know, when you look at, you know, oh, maybe I'll try to take it down on three kids at once. Just don't don't.

Sasha

Like I'd rather have less data that's quality and consistent than, hey, in August, I took data on three kids every day for three weeks, it was great. Like, and then I never did it again, you know. So you lose steam on that because it's not sustainable. So that like, Hey, I'm gonna get to Johnny once a week. And you know what, that's great. And that's enough. And I think that pressure sometimes gets overwhelming for teachers and for clinicians too that, like, we gotta be doing data on every single thing, every single day. You don't, you know, you don't.

Chris

Right. Well, and I see that sometimes as one of the areas where a lot of people will tell teachers that they need data. They don't give them any real understanding of what kind of data, how often they take data. And there's always this assumption of I have to take data on everything. It's like, No, you have to

have clearly defined things that you're taking data on. And maybe you schedule them because like I'd rather have a really strong sample of one day a week of data in some cases than five days where I can't count on whether or not it was accurate, because we tried to take frequency data across the whole day.

Sasha

Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Chris

And I see that that struggle a lot that teachers are, you know, because again, they're the only message they're getting is you have to take data, where's your data? And so that's a really good point. Do you find that different people have different like, organizational styles that work for them, like I'm listening to you talk about a binder and I'm thinking I get messed up by binders? I do better with a stack of clipboards.

Sasha

Yeah, it's totally, it's so personal.

Chris

Right. And my kids are in order, so I can just pull them out as we go. Now, I'm also the person that when I'm done with instruction, it looks like a hurricane hit the area. But back when I was working, doing consultation in classrooms, I used to have to tell teachers, it's okay, I'm gonna come back and clean that like, I'm not leaving your class that way. But I think that's the other thing that's really hard is just trying to figure out what works for the teacher and also what works for the paras in terms of data collection.

Sasha

And it's hard to like, let go of the reins a little as the teacher to the paras to give them that flexibility. Like hey, if you find these binders annoying and you want to do clipboards, use clipboards. If you want to just have post-its and then transfer to the data sheet later, cool. And you know, I'm I'm pretty type A so I feel that on that that like, oh, well, I don't want to let them make their choices. But it's very respectful, I think to like, Hey, what's your preference? What's going to work best for you? And then you're gonna get way better results for something that feels more natural for that person.

Chris

Yeah, I remember an aid I had that was taking data. And he, we were using just a plus and a minus. And there were x's and x's usually meant there was no opportunity for anything. And so I walked in when consultation period, picked up the data sheet, and I'm like, oh, no, like, This is bad. And I went to the teacher luckily, first and she's like, No, it that's what he does when he does it, he writes an x in the box. And I'm like, Oh, okay. She's like, I mean, we can tell him, and I'm like no. If it works for him. It's fine. I can adjust.

Sasha

Yeah. Exactly.

Chris

And I think that that's one of the reasons like people always like, you know, what data sheet should I use? Or, you know, what system should I use? And I'm always like, well, let's figure out really what your organizational style is.

Chris

Like, I'm a person who has to see everything, like, I know where everything is on my desk. No one would believe me if I told them that. It's a disaster. But I always think back to two different teachers I had who took data really, really neatly. They were both pretty much OCD. And they both knew that about themselves. And their data is the only data I've ever had that like had no mark outs. No, nothing. Like it's pristine. And I actually still believe they took it.

Chris

But what was funny was their aides would not take data in their binder, because they're like, I'm gonna mess up her form. And she's like, no. I don't care if you mess up my form, I really don't. They're like, No, no, we need another sheet of our own, we're not taking data on that.

Chris

It's really hard. It's, it's a really hard thing to balance. And you've always had to prioritize the instruction with, you know, with the data. It's like, how do you keep the kids engaged?

Chris

And what is your best advice when you're thinking about a beginning teacher first or second year, who's just really kind of starting to get into the groove of things. How do you suggest that they look at setting up like a data system or setting up a data plan?

Sasha

I think you've got to start so small. So like, so slowly. And really the start of the year, I think besides the major behavior data, I would really like not have that on my, on my radar, the first few weeks, months, whatever it takes.

Sasha

Like, because the start of the year, especially when you're new is about like those systems and processes, getting your routines down, getting your schedules, it's about rapport. It's about reinforcement. And yes, some data will come into that.

Sasha

But as far as your academic data, I think it's so overwhelming, you know, now to go on Instagram, blogs, you know, TikTok everywhere. There's like all these ideas, and it's like, I gotta do everything. Like pick one thing. That's it, like, pick, pick one goal, pick one student, whatever you want to do, and know that like, just because I'm picking to take data on language arts goals right now, doesn't mean you're ignoring math, it's just means you're not ready for math yet, like you'll get there. And if you're starting with language arts in October, maybe you add in data on some math goals in December.

Sasha

And we we fade that in. It's especially for a first year teacher or a teacher, that's first year to special ed, then maybe they're in Gen Ed. I mean, it's just like, you know, you're gonna like almost getting hazed those first few weeks. Like so adding in the data piece is, I mean, I probably I mean, my first year teaching was a long time ago. I know with certainty, I took no data, my first year teaching because I was like treading water surviving.

Sasha

Like, I had major behaviors. I had brand new paras, I had an empty classroom. I didn't even know I was probably supposed to be taking data. So you know, it comes it really can. And, and so I think having expectations that are reasonable, because again, we'd rather have it start slowly and be consistent and have that buy in, have that value, be training your paras well, than trying to do it all really once and then just burning out because I think that's why our teachers are really burning out and not able to come back because of the unrealistic expectations that they're facing.

Chris

No, I think you're totally right. And I think that's certainly something that we're we're seeing, we were seeing it before COVID. And we're seeing it even more now. And it's just again, I mean, with most of those things. It's just expectation upon expectation upon expectation without a real like, how does your room run?

Sasha

Yeah. And it's really vague expectations to like you, like you've said a few times like it's like here, it takes data, reduce behaviors, teach. And you're like teach what, reduce, I don't know how to reduce behaviors. What kind of data and it's so that gets really overwhelming too when, you know, you're supposed to be doing something but no one's been specific enough with you to know if you're doing it right or wrong.

Sasha

So I think that's challenging to that even if you feel like you are taking data and you're doing it well, you don't know if it's right because you haven't been given those clear expectations, from administrators, from your district, you're like, is this what they want? I don't know. So I think once you kind of are in a good groove, you just have to kind of be confident in yourself. Because let's be real, your administrators don't know either. Like they're just telling you this, but like, they don't exactly know what they want or need either.

Chris

And in my experience, if you show up at an IEP and you've got data, they're happy. I gauranteed your administrators aren't gonna look at your data and go, This isn't right, because you should have been taking this kind of data. It's like, you have data!

Sasha

I know. I know. I know. I'm, like, joked I like and if it's charted, I mean, you could chart like, how many Cheetos you ate last week, no one cares. Like, oh, you charted data? Oh, my God, and like, you're gonna be the best teacher ever. So it'll be great.

Chris

Right. What do you suggest, as far as once you once the teacher started taking some data, what kind of system do you look at for analyzing data? Like, what kinds of things do you use?

Sasha

I think that we need, I'm like a big fan of like any prompts, reminders for ourselves, because again, we have like our best intentions. A few things, I think having that mastery criteria, really well thought out from the start is really important. Because you know, we kind of tend to arbitrarily assign those, right, you're like on your 40th IEP of the year, you throw like an 80% mastery criteria on everything and move on. And then later, you're like, wait a minute, No, he can't identify letters with 80% mastery, we need 100% mastery with that skill. Like we have to figure this out differently.

Sasha

So really thinking critically about the mastery criteria, and then those benchmarks of what's coming next. And then when you look at that data on a regular basis, having some type of scheduled system. Like, we need systems ourselves, whether that's like your Monday prep, or staying 10 minutes late, every Thursday, something that like is embedded in your routine that you set a calendar reminder, you have an alert go off.

Sasha

Like it's a thing with multiple reminders, like I need even multiple reminders. So multiple reminders are happening. And I think then if you get your system really well set up, if you thought critically about the goal, how you're taking data, having that mastery criteria written out, the analysis piece really should be quick and easy.

Sasha

You should be able to look at that data and think, my question I always share is like, Should I continue on, move on, or change? Continue on means things are going pretty good. We're making our way we're just going to business as usual. You know, change means something's not right. We're plateauing. We're regressing, we to go back to what our instruction is, and think about it different. And then change is, let's go to that next mastery criteria. So looking at that, like, Should I continue on, move on or change or move on is going on to the next mastery criteria.

Sasha

When you look at the data, you should be able to tell quickly, you know, if we've hit mastery criteria, great, let's move on. If we haven't, are we about to be there? Or is something not right with, what's going on? Has this been too long on this skill? And I think you if you look, it makes that decision easy. If you've done all that, like legwork too.

Sasha

And having that just scheduled where you go through everything and you're like, alright, and like, hey, you know, maybe these are the three goals or programs I'm working on right now that like something's gotta change. And I'm gonna, I'm gonna write that on a post it and tomorrow when I'm teaching, I'm gonna think about like, Hey, should we be scaling back? Is the field size too big? Or are my prompts confusing? And think about that, while you're teaching about what's going on that you could kind of change your instructional strategies?

Chris

Yeah. Yeah, I always talk about like, we call it data Thursday, because it's what we used to do at the preschool where we used to be able to just, because we had a self contained setting, we were able to go no meetings on Thursdays, we're doing data collection, data analysis.

Chris

But I've done that with with teachers in their schools where they just have like an accountability buddy sometimes too. Every Thursday, we're gonna sit down and look at our data. And you're right, exactly right. But once you have those systems up, it's so much easier, and I always call it there's no more all nighters before the progress report. That is not the time that you want to sit and look at your data.

Sasha

Yeah, exactly. And like, you know, I think if, if the goals are well thought out and specific, and I think that's kind of another struggle that we have is, we think it's going to be more complicated, the more detailed we get. But it's actually easier, the more detailed we get, because we don't have to really think through, Was that correct? Was that incorrect? Should I count that? Should I not?

Sasha

If we get super detailed, like when it comes to problem behavior, really defining what that problem behavior is, when it comes to academics, what is an error, you know, is that if he takes too long to answer? What am I counting that if he self corrects, how am I counting that?

Sasha

If you made all those decisions ahead of time, when you're in the moment and teaching, you don't have to be thinking through like, oh, this and that, and that's what makes data collection really hard. Is that like decision fatigue of it. Is, you know, think oh, like, oh, well, he kind of do that by himself but I have to like summarize if it's prompted or not.

Sasha

If you can really get detailed on that ahead of time, it actually makes the data collection in the moment easier, but it'll make that data analysis easier too because your data's gonna be really clear versus like this vague series of like negative, you know, minus. He didn't do that you're like, Well, I don't know what that meant.

Chris

yeah, why did we get there? And I think that fits really well with, I've been talking in the last year about my core model. And the idea that so much of that classroom organization results in effectiveness model

is that you have the system set up ahead of time, so that you don't have to think while you're trying to run the classroom at the same time.

Chris

So you've already thought through all those exact kinds of decisions. So I think that's a really good piece of advice. Because that is exactly what causes that decision fatigue of you already have a million decisions that you're making every day that you can't avoid, like, what do I do when he does this? And where'd that kid go? And what is that person doing over there? Why are they doing puzzles again?

Chris

And so you got to free your brain up to be able to handle that. Anything that you can decide ahead of time is golden, Makes it much easier. And then it's also a habit, I think is another thing I've talked about in the past is, you know, especially for new teachers that it's a habit and it takes practice, and it doesn't come easily. If you're going to try a new datasheet, try one at a time and stick with it for a while. Because to this day, we used to have a data sheet that is graph as you go but it graph from the bottom up. So we put our data in at the bottom of the page and then put it up. And to this day, I will sit down and do Discrete trials and take data from the bottom of the data sheet. Because that's my motor memory.

Sasha

But like, but not like trying to force a round cube. What's that phrase? A round cube in a square hole? You know what I mean? Like that, if it's not working, why? If we're at October, and we've been sitting with his data sheet for two months, and it's like, still aversive for you, figure why. We do this with our kids with aversive things in the classroom. We have to do that with ourselves too. Like, Hey, why do I hate taking data here? Why do I avoid this? What about this is not working? And it's sometimes in those simple things of like, Hey, I'd prefer this to be a landscape instead of you know, portrait, like it'd be easier that way, like, then change it.

Sasha

Yeah. And that's powerful too the motor memory, my gosh, and like and really and thinking through like, thinking critically like what you said, trying things out. And then if it's not working, thinking about why instead of just like trying to force it. Like imagine if someone gave you a data sheet that was the reverse, and you were just like trying to force yourself to do the opposite the whole year, like that would be so effortful, and after a while feel like heavy and annoying. And now like data is aversive. And you don't really know why.

Chris

That's a really, really good point. I love the idea of, you know, figure out what's not working for you. And if it's aversive, figure out a different way to do it. I think that's huge. And especially because as you said earlier, there's so many like things that they're bombarded with on social media of you know, oh, look, I've got these three colored counters that I can take data on three kids at a time. And I'm like, yeah, yeah, I can't do that. Yeah, I can't do it with a counter, because I will screw up and one of them will have the wrong count, and I can't fix it. So I think that's a really, really good point. Any other thoughts about data? I have so many, I can't.

Sasha

I know, right, we've like kind of touched on so many things already. You know, I think when you think about behavior, data versus academic data, behavior data does have a little bit more urgency, because we've kinda, we kind of talking a lot about academic data and to touch on like behavior data, I think it has a little bit more urgency, and importance, especially when we're dealing with things like aggression, or property destruction, or eloping. But also at the same time, because of extreme behaviors, then it can be pushed to the side very quickly.

Sasha

You know, you're not in the middle of an aggressive episode with a child like, Hold on, let me write down that that was a punch. And, you know, you, that gets pushed to the side very quickly. But, you know, we so critically need the data piece there when it comes to those behaviors. Because if we don't, we don't know how our behavior plans should look. And then you know, in the in the piece in the lead up to our writing our behavior plans. But then after that, we don't know if our strategies are working or not. And we have to really rely on our data for that analysis piece.

Sasha

I mean, same with academics. There's just so much as you said, going on in your head throughout the day, throughout the week that our opinions are not sufficient for deciding if a goal has been mastered or if a behavior plan is working. And that's not because our opinions aren't good. It's just that there's too much going on that we need that objective data piece to help us make those decisions as opposed to you know, what we think.

Sasha

And with behavior, it's really, really hard, I think, to take a bird's eye view when when you're part of it, like you're part of the environment, you're part of the problem. Whether or not you'd like to admit it, like you play a role in this behavior. Because you're part of getting feedback, receiving feedback, consequences, you're part of the antecedent.

Sasha

And it's hard to see like, and I'm sure you've been in that situation as a consultant, you know, you walk in and you see something like, Oh God, it's really obvious and teachers like oh my god, how do I not see that this is what's happening? And then you're like, Well, I'm not part of it. It's easy for me, you know, in an objective observer, but it's hard as the teacher or the para to see that. So I think data gives us that opportunity from a behaviors perspective, to be the observer, you know.

Chris

No, that's a really good point. And I think that's something that's also really important, even with instructional data, especially with a lot of a lot of our kids that are have more significant disabilities, their progress is not something that happens really quickly, a lot of times, but it doesn't mean the progress isn't there. And it's always amazing to watch as a teacher starts to really track that data for them to be able to see oh, wow, he really did make progress, because he mastered three of these steps since you

know, two months ago. But you wouldn't have noticed it if you were just teaching with, you know, teaching him and not tracking it.

Sasha

Yeah, exactly. And those like little steps really do add up, but day to day, you don't really see it.

Chris

Right. And I think that's true with behavior as well. I think sometimes it's one of the things I don't know if you've seen this, but one of the things that I always saw was I would put a behavior plan in place. And I'd come back a week later. And I'd say, How's it going, Oh, he's so much better. He's so much better. And I take data and I'd be like, he's exactly the way he was when I saw him last time. And they're like, no no, he's so much better.

Chris

And I began to realize that what it was is, he was so much better because they knew how what they were going to do when the behavior happened. They had a plan. And so their stress level went down. So his behavior wasn't as stressful as it was before. And I think that has been another really important reason for why we need that behavior data, because it's very easy for it to become very subjective very quickly without realizing it.

Sasha

Oh, yeah. I mean, and that that situation happens a lot too. Like you said, I'm like, oh, yeah, things are going good. Like, and I think we also and I like joke about this, like, you know, those like Febreeze commercials, like the nose blind effect, like, I feel like teachers go like nose blind. Like, we just get used to it, right?

Sasha

Like someone comes to your room. And they're like, what's that loud noise? You're like, what, what noise? No, like that blood curdling scream, and you're like, oh, that's just the inner monologue of my life now, you know, like you and you're just like, oh, I only got bit seven times today. And you're like, wait, I shouldn't say that. But you, you get used to it, which is good. I mean, you don't quit your job. You're, you're not like, you know, burnt out. But like, it doesn't do our kids a great service, because they're not actually learning new skills, reducing challenging behaviors. We're just like, used to toning it out, or like dodging punches now.

Sasha

So if we have that data to tell us like, I want to know that, like, a lot of these behavior plans are really, really hard and effortful to put into place. And if it's not working, let's not keep doing it. Right. Like let's do something different.

Chris

Right? No, I think that's a really good point. And so many times, I think that's true with anything. It's like, we're just doing the same things over and over, it's like, well, then you're going to keep getting the same outcome.

Sasha

Yeah, exactly.

Chris

It's not going to change on its own. So that's a really good point. Other tips that you have, or anything else that you can think of?

Sasha

You know, I think really, in general, just like not being too hard on yourself, if this was a year where, you know, you got three new placements in the middle of the year, you were understaffed all year long. And you're like, quite honestly, I'm embarrassed to say I took no data this year. That is okay. Like, you're still a good teacher. Those kids are still lucky to have you. It's never too late to add on. I think people are like embarrassed, like, Oh, my God, I haven't. It's, it's okay. It's okay.

Sasha

Like, I mean, look at where education is right now. I think every single school is like chronically understaffed. And we thought that like four years ago, and that's hilarious. Like, if you literally don't have staff, like you're supposed to have three paras in your room and you have maybe one. And you have kids with toileting needs or significant behavior issues. Like, you're just not getting to that and that's okay. Because with the situation you're in, that's all you can do. And I think that's fine.

Sasha

So just really like, you know, as we wrap up this school year, and think about certain thing about next year, like just giving yourself grace, if you're in that really tough season of your career, where you have extreme behaviors, you have an overcrowded classroom, you're super understaffed. Those are more pressing eminent needs, that data might not be right there right now. That's okay. It'll, you'll get there.

Chris

Right. Well, and one of the things I always talk about too, is prioritize your instruction, then prioritize your data. Because if you don't have good instruction, you're not going to, the data, you're probably not going to want to see it.

Sasha

Yeah, that's true.

Chris

And so, you know, it's one of the things I used to do is literally like, take the data sheets away from them and put them away and like you're not allowed to touch them for another month. Like just get the hang of the classroom first. But I think that's a good point about this year, too, is that I've been telling teachers, you know, we have to start thinking too about at what point is it worth really burning out this teacher who has this drive and is interested and this desire to work in these classrooms, where we already know we can't get enough people to do it? And you can't do everything, you just can't. And it's an unrealistic expectation for anyone to think that you can.

Sasha

I know. I'm like, I'm thinking right now of one of the teachers I've been working with that they couldn't hire a teacher, it teacher for the other classroom, subs stopped showing up. So they took that class, split it between two classrooms. So she has a class and a half of kids. And they came to her like, mid February. Like you think she's taking data right now? No way. She's like struggling to go to the bathroom. Like you think her kids have great instruction right now? No way. She's doing the best she can though in the situation she's given. And yeah, is that legal? No. Is that right? No, but like, that's where some of our teachers are at.

Chris

Right. It's not in her control. And that's, that's one of the things I find myself saying to the teachers over and over right now is just, you can't be responsible for the situation that you've been put in, you can only be responsible for what you're doing in it. And here's kind of a priority of where you have to start, you start with safety. And then we move into the peices that are next.

Sasha

And like your mental health, like you said, like this is not worth burning out over. So as as much as you and I will say all day long data is so important. It's it's not as important as a safety or mental health, as as surviving. So it'll get there later when we have those needs met.

Chris

Right. Yeah, I have teachers this year that have that I've been working with who have had rotating subs all year long, they've never had a consistent para. And I'm like, you're just going to need to put them in a place where they can do something very simple. They have very simple directions, you've given them very clear directions. And you're going to have to let it go. Because you're not going to be able to have the classroom be where you want it to be or what you think it should be. You've got to lower your expectations. That's a really good point.

Sasha

As much as we don't want that.

Chris

I know, you know, it goes against everything that we get trained on. But it's also where we really have to look at, we have this great science and these great strategies, but they have to be implemented in an actual context. And unfortunately, our context is kind of failing us at the moment.

Chris

All right. Well, can you tell everybody where they can find you and any other information that you want to share?

Sasha

Yeah, you can find me pretty much anywhere @theautismhelper. So Instagram, Tik Tok, Pinterest, theautismhelper.com is our website where our blog is and it links to our podcasts and all that good stuff. And yeah.

Chris

thank you so so much for joining me, it is always fun to geek out about data and also to talk about, one of the things I really love about talking to you is talking about the practical issues of data that I can talk to a lot of people who are like, well, you have to be taking blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And it's like, yeah, have you been in a classroom?

Sasha

I know you can. I mean, you know, as much as I love obviously the field of ABA, you can tell real quick who has never worked in a school, like right away. It's like Oh, like no, that's, in a clinic, Great. Not in a public school, so.

Chris

Exactly, exactly. So I really appreciate your perspective.

Sasha

Well, thank you so much, Chris, for having me. This has been really fun.

Chris

Alright, thank you.

Chris

Thanks so much for listening to today's episode of the Autism Classroom Resources podcast. For even more support, you can access free materials, webinars and Video Tips inside my free resource library. Sign up at autismclassroomresources.com/free. That's F-R-E-E or click the link in the show notes to join the free library today. I'll catch you again next week.