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SPEAKERS

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.

Welcome back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. I'm Chris Reeve. Last week, I gave you an overview of seven steps in instructional loops. I also talked about how instructional loops, or teaching loops as Dr. Ilene Schwartz describes them, are the key elements of all types of instruction from brushing your teeth, to learning quantum physics. No, quantum physics is not on your students' IEP or in their curriculum, I promise. You can learn more about the seven elements at autismclassroomresources.com/episode180. And I'll put a link in the show notes as well.

Now today, I'll be talking about how we choose instructional goals and targets because it's about more than just pulling goals from the IEP. How well you structure your learning objectives and your target skills are going to determine how you break the skill down to teach it. And I promise to keep these episodes bite sized. So I better get started.

So good instruction always begins with assessment. You have to have a good assessment to know what the student is able to do and not able to do in order to determine what you need to teach. So it should give you global enough information to cover all the areas that are needed, but give you age and skill appropriate skills for what you need.

And it can be a lot of different options, the strategies for teaching based on autism research, the assessment for language and basic language and learning skills, the ABLLS, the assessment of functional living skills, the AFLS. It could be the Unique Learning System that I know many of you use, it could be a VB-MAPP, it could also even if you work in preschool, it could be a HELP or Brigance.

So there's lots of different options that we can choose from. And we're going to take our skills from our curriculum based assessment, which is what we use those things for, down into what this individual needs us to teach them. What are their objectives that are coming from that curriculum? And that's a whole other set of podcast episodes to talk about that whole process. But I think it's important to recognize that you're going to get teaching skills from your curriculum as well as your IEP.

So you're going to choose what your skill is that you're going to teach, you're going to define that specific skill very clearly, you're going to describe it by its duration and severity, a little like you're writing an IEP goal, and you are going to prioritize which skills that you have are the ones that you need to intervene with first.

So one of the things that I always tell people to look at, is when they're teaching something, to make sure that we're focusing on the teaching targets that are most relevant to the student's daily life. So I've seen lots of people who have taught a whole bunch of different animal names to students, for example. But they taught them gazelle and elephant and zebra and ostrich instead of butterfly and duck and cat and dog, which are ones that they're more likely to see unless they happen to live in a zoo.

So we want to make sure that we're teaching the ones that involve their everyday life. So can they name all the their clothing, the things they bring to school, their school supplies, their other children in their class, their family members? Those are the things you want to select as your targets first.

And so when you go to create those good objectives, there are some questions you really want to ask very much like an IEP. You want to really drill down and get specific, What will he do? When will he do it? Who does he do it with? Where do you expect him to perform the skill? How often does he have to do it in order to get mastery? And when do you predict that he's going to master it?

So let me give you just a couple of examples. I could have a teaching skill that just says John will increase verbal interactions, but doesn't really give me any information about what kind of verbal interactions. For instance, it's a lot different for students to have an interaction with me than with a peer. It's a lot different for them to ask for something that they want than it is to answer a question. Those are very different skills and we go about different ways of teaching them. So they lend themselves to different types of strategies.

A better way to put it might be John will initiate verbal interactions such as greetings, requests, comments, so not just requests which is often our first skill, with more than one adult in the classroom, so adults he's familiar with, with gestural prompts, so the prompting is built in at the end

stage, from staff members for 80% of the opportunities that are presented over two consecutive weeks.

Now, we want to think about the fact that this is very specific, but it also tells me, I need to create opportunities for him to ask these questions when he's with an adult. I need to practice it with the adults in the classroom. I don't need to be practicing with the other kids right now, I need to be practicing with the adults because that's what I'm trying to teach.

Jenny will attend to a task or activity without incident with visual prompts in the class situation, up to 25 minutes, three or four days a week, three out of five days a week rather. And so I'm very specific, she's not going to be perfect at it. It's going to be up to 25 minutes. That tells me that I need to be a little bit more specific when I do my teaching program, which we'll talk about next week, when we break that down. We don't just start by expecting her to do it for 25 minutes at a time. But that's my end goal. And so I know exactly what I need to set up.

So this week's action tip, look at your curricula and your IEPs which I'm sure you've already done. But figure out if the skills that you see the student needs to learn are very clearly defined. Flag some skills that you are teaching that you aren't quite sure are clear. I'm guessing you have probably several because you may have gotten IEPs from other teachers who wrote the goals differently.

For those target skills that you flagged, think about whether you could more clearly define them. Consider giving them to a fellow teacher for some feedback to see what they think it says. And make sure that you're absolutely clear on what the skill is, that it reflects where your student is currently performing, and that you know the steps that you're going to take to teach it. If any of those points aren't there, then you may want to consider revising or tweaking the target skill to match the student's present level and where he's at.

And if you're not sure about what the steps might be, we're actually going to talk about that next week. So hold on to whatever you're doing for the action tip this week. Because next week, I will be talking about how we break skills down into steps. And those goals that you're looking at now they need some zhugging for that once you set them up for that.

So if you're enjoying the series or the podcast is whole, I'd love for you to hop over to Apple podcasts and share a review. Or if reviews aren't for you, share it with another teacher friend. My goal is to always make your jobs easier, and help teachers be more effective. If you think the podcast has helped you with that, sharing is a great way to expand that effort. And I really, really thank you for listening. And I hope I'll see you again next week.

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