

Great Expectations: Building Better Communication between Schools and Families

UNIVERSITY OF
LOUISVILLE[®]

KENTUCKY AUTISM
TRAINING CENTER



Power of Parental Involvement

- Relationship building
- Parental Stress
- Positive child outcomes
 - Systemic Change
 - Individual change

Positive child outcomes?

- Parent involvement is a core feature of evidence-based approaches to intervention for ASD
 - Determination of instructional targets
 - Delivery of instruction
 - Longitudinal programming

Urgency in Autism

- The complexities of autism make parent involvement imperative
 - Problems with generalization
 - Mismatch between school and home outcomes
 - Early intervention
 - Numbers of instructional trials required

Barriers to Parental Involvement

- Diversity/Culture
- Learning History
- Resources
- Defining of Roles
- School system bureaucracy
- Teacher training

Different Perspectives?

- Parent's world
 - Limited resources
 - Competing priorities
 - Negative feedback from schools
 - Negative feedback about schools
 - Systems are complex, and reinforcement is thin

Different Perspectives?

- Teacher's world
 - Limited resources
 - Competing priorities
 - Negative feedback from parents
 - Negative feedback about parents
 - Systems are complex, and reinforcement is thin

Coming together

- Perspectives can serve as major barriers unless there are working channels of communication

Getting the best reception

- Recognizing that clear communication goes both ways
- That communication has to be beneficial to both parties
- That communication has to be ongoing



Creating Clear Channels

- Keep a point of contact to avoid mixed messages



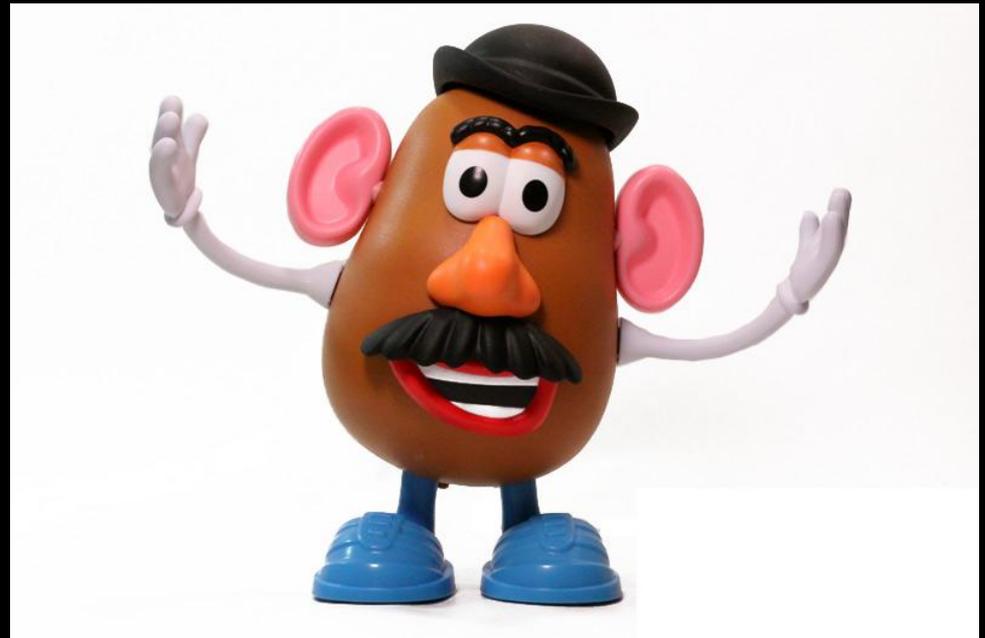
Creating Clear Channels

- Use language that everyone can understand
 - Take it deeper than just “avoiding jargon”
 - Consider underlying theoretical perspectives or belief systems



Creating Clear Channels

- Really listen, avoid just “waiting for your turn to speak”



Creating Clear Channels

- Reinforce attempts at communication
 - Share positives
 - Express gratitude
 - Share goodies
 - Bake goods
 - Resources
 - Photos/Child Products



Creating Clear Channels

- Keep it objective
 - Outline issues
 - Avoid the blame game, it distracts from real issues
 - Share data



Creating Clear Channels

- Go deep!
 - Consider systemic issues that prevent desired outcomes
 - Tackle what is doable now and plan for making long term change



Creating Clear Channels

- Keep it continuous but relevant
 - Communication in itself is not the goal
 - Communication should provide data that are useful for both parties
 - Maintain constant conversation around team goals and effectiveness



Communication Tools

- Daily Communication notebooks
 - Describe daily activities, performance
 - Medical information
 - Behavioral Supports



Daily Communication notebooks

- Formats
 - Established school agendas
 - Spiral notebooks
 - Specialized forms
 - Web-based blogs

Daily Communication notebooks

■ Purposes

■ Tracking

■ Promoting generalization

- Johnny learned this, can you assess...

■ Instructional content

- Mary went to the movies over the weekend, she saw
- John mentioned in class he might like to work in a bank, what do you think?

Considerations

- Consider the time it takes to complete the notebooks
- Excuse minor trespasses
- Stay positive and remember inflection cannot always be accurately inferred
- When addressing touchy subjects, get a second read

Email

- Quick way to share information
- Same considerations as daily communication notebooks
- Not everyone is comfortable with email communication, so it cannot be expected
- Consider intermittent emails

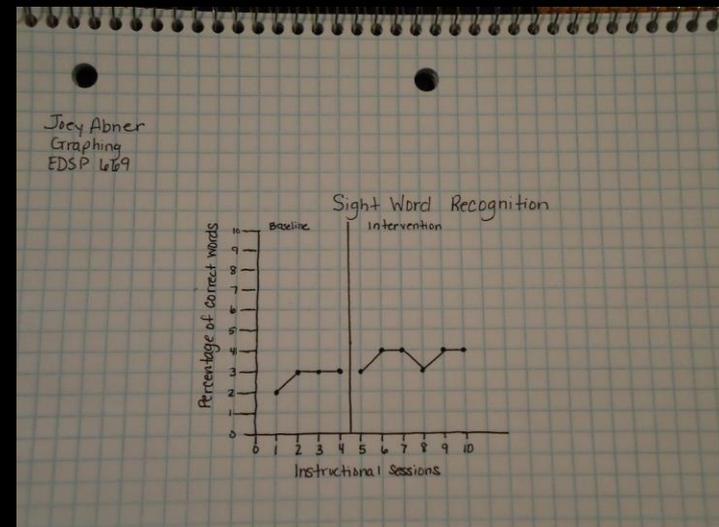
Sharing Data

- Permanent product data
- Digital media
 - Pictures and video media
 - Personal YouTube/Vimeo pages
 - Ipod sharing
- Build an electronic portfolio



Sharing Graphed Data

- Graphed data provide one of the most effective means of evaluating student progress
- Data can be shared
 - via photo copies
 - Scanned copies
 - Or Google docs



New Twists on Phone Conferences

- Using free video conferencing software
 - Skype/Face-time
 - Less travel time for families
 - Flexibility in scheduling
 - Opportunities to show classroom materials
 - Share data files
 - Meet with multiple participants
 - Dual custody/outside agencies



Other Communication Strategies

- Class newsletters
 - Great way to share
 - Student news, family news, community news
- Student journals
- Blogs
- Classroom listservs

Facilitating Gatherings

- Quarterly teas, potlucks, breakfasts
- Family trainings
- Invited speakers

Avoiding Mucked Meetings

- Consider how levels of ongoing communication can impact episodic, meeting-based communication.
 - Unnecessary urgency to “get it all out there”



Avoid summoning the Hordes

- Sometimes it is difficult to balance inviting the most relevant people and keeping the group to a workable size.
- Consider the purpose of the meeting and only the necessary to meet the proposed objectives

Avoid a Fast Food Approach

- Meetings should not continue past their efficacy or restricted by squeezing them into 30 minutes intervals.
- Agendas or IEP's should not be merely delivered, they should be developed within the meeting

Consider Pre planning

- Student objectives are not easy to develop. It may be beneficial for parents and teachers to meet in advance to discuss and draft IEP goals and objectives

Bring Evidence of Humanity

- Consider starting the meeting by sharing a picture, video of the target child.
- Consider having the child welcome the group and share their own vision
 - PowerPoint
 - Video

Offer your Respect

- **Everyone** bring expertise to the room



Stay focused

- Avoid sidebar conversations
- Revisit important points and check for consensus
- Document
- Summarize

Statements to avoid (Cheatham et al., 2012)

- To save some time we went ahead and...
- Because the student has autism, he should be served in..
- I need to check with before I can commit to
- Nothing works for this child...
- If only someone did this ...then the child would do this.....
- This program does not serve.....

Questions

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