

Classroom jobs: An Intervention for a Student with ASD

Abstract

Children with ASD have difficulty engaging in social interactions. The purpose of this action research study is to investigate potential improvements in social behaviors of a student with mild to moderate ASD when given classroom jobs that require social interaction.

Statement of the Problem

According to The American Psychiatric Association, children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are characterized by deficits in communication, difficulty forming social relationships, responding appropriately to social cues, and sharing social experiences with others (as cited in (Carrero et al., 2014). As such, children with ASD have difficulty engaging in social interactions. Play behaviors among peers has been linked with improvements supporting cognitive functioning, social development, an increase in social skills. Play may also be associated with these children experiencing increased engagement in an inclusive setting (Carrero et al., 2014).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this action research study is to investigate how effective are social communication strategies, such as assigning classroom jobs, on improving the social skills of a student with ASD in a second grade class. Furthermore, how effective is each classroom job (i.e., table monitor, greeter, and kindness keeper) in increasing the social interactions of a student with ASD in a second grade classroom.

Literature Review

Ruble (2001) stated that social behaviors have been linked to intentional and executive functioning, which entail abilities that mediate rapid shifting of attention, processing of complex

stimuli, and maintenance of goal-directed behaviors. Research indicates that children who have severe language disabilities are at higher risk for diagnosis of additional psychiatric disorders if they also exhibit less frequent prosocial behaviors than children with the same level of language disabilities but with more frequent prosocial behaviors (as cited in Harjusola-Webb et al., 2012). Children with ASD who lack these social interactions, may miss out on the benefits associated with making connections with peers. This places children at a social disadvantage during their early stages of development, and without proper intervention, the severity of these disadvantages may continue. With school-aged children, the use of classroom jobs not only teaches students to cooperate and depend on one another, they learn to do so in a community setting and in turn create a positive community (Obchain et al, 2003). Swoden (2011) agrees that social interactions must be taught in a child's natural environment, and further evaluates naturalistic behavior-based programs. Classroom jobs are strategies that are implicated within the natural context of the classroom environment. With school-aged children, the use of classroom jobs not only teaches students to cooperate and depend on one another, they learn to do so in a community setting and in turn create a positive community (Obchain et al, 2003).

Research Methodology

The study will take place in an inclusion classroom located in a Miami Dade County elementary school. The participant of this study will be a seven-year-old male student who has ASD. Baseline data will be collected through observation and written anecdotal of instances where he shows initiation or engagement in social interaction or lack there of. The use of classroom jobs that require social interaction will be used as intervention and instances of social behaviors will continue to be observed and monitored.

Results

Research findings will be available and presented during the conference.

Implications

Overall, children with ASD are somewhat deprived from the benefits of social interactions, and as such; they are at a social disadvantage. While engaging in social behaviors among peers, children with ASD have been known to show improvements which support cognitive functioning, social development. Students with ASD who are able to generalize social skills have also been associated with experiencing increased engagement in an inclusive setting.

References

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