Stuck in the MIDDLE

Program Development and Supports for Students with Autism at the Middle School Level

Today's GOALS

1. To define inclusion as it relates to students with ASD
2. To identify potential barriers to inclusion
3. To identify effective inclusion practices at the Middle School level
4. To preview a model Middle School program on Long Island

What is “inclusion”? How does NYS compare?

Time for a quick poll!
Now, where does that leave us?

Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities

What do “high-quality inclusive programs” look like at the Middle School level?

- Educators must use the full continuum of services to ensure LRE
- The needs of the students are the “primary” consideration when configuring special education programs
- District/school leaders allocate human and financial resources to support scheduling/planning time
- SWD in inclusive settings are provided accommodations & explicit & specially designed instruction

Now, what does that look like in real life?
A day in the life of an 8th grade student with ASD

**POB MS Sample Education Program**

**Grades 5 & 6:**
- Example:
  - Math/Science: 1 General Education Teacher
  - SS/ELA: 1 General Education Teacher

**Grades 7 & 8:**
- Example:
  - Math/Science: 2 General Education Teachers
  - SS/ELA: 2 General Education Teachers

SAME SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER IN ALL CORE CLASSES
- PE
- SKILLS CLASS
What is a “Skills” class at POB?

- 2 special education teachers, up to 24 students

To address:
- Pre-teach
- Reteach
- Executive functioning
- Assessment
- IEP goals

Contextual Considerations: Setting the Stage for what Works

- Flow of day visually represented
- Objectives clearly identified
- Seating plan
- Workspace
  - Desks
- Designated break areas/“recharge station”
- Visuals! Visuals! Visuals!

Cognitive characteristics of students with ASDs that may affect learning:

- Difficulty with integration of material
- Difficulty with attending
- Tendency toward visual thinking
- Memorization of irrelevant details
- Problem solving strategies
Common Discrimination Errors

- Overselectivity: the student pays too much attention to a detail of the item being presented.
- Overgeneralization: the student uses a skill in situations or with materials to which it does not apply (e.g., a student highlights every detail in a book instead of focusing on the relevant details).
- Habitual responding: the student consistently chooses stimuli depending on its location (e.g., always chooses the last answer in multiple-choice questions).
- Impulsivity: the student ignores the teacher’s instruction due to eagerness to answer and randomly responds.
- Attention to non-significant cues: the student pays attention to irrelevant or non-significant cues (prompts) of the instructor (e.g., voice level, eye gaze of the instructor).

Consider the following:

- Teach
- Adapt
- Support

Differentiation is the rule, not the exception!
3. INSTRUCTION

Informed Decision Making

- Curriculum planning
- Instructional design
  - What to teach?
  - How to teach?
  - Where to teach?
  - Who else is involved?

ASSESSMENT FIRST!

- Identify academic content standards from the general education curriculum that align with the skills.
- Assess areas relevant to both learning and quality of life (independence)
- Create groups based on assessments

Using Your Exit Ticket Data to Create Groups

- Whole Class-Exit Ticket Score of 1-5
  - Scored 1-2
  - Scored 3-4
  - Scored 5
Effective Instruction

- PLANNING
- ASSESSMENT
- EXECUTION: WHICH MODEL DO I USE TODAY?

MODELS:
- Team teaching
- Parallel teaching
- Station Teaching
- 1 teach, 1 observe
- 1 teach, 1 assist
- Alternative teaching

The Flight School Method

1. Group lesson presented
2. “Flight School” teacher(s) meet students who need additional support in one area of the classroom
3. Co-pilot students who may not be fully ready to complete the activity independently are paired with a peer to co-pilot
4. “Ready to fly solo” student completes activity independently
5. Check

“Flight School” Plan
4. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Identify the Barriers... then the SOLUTIONS

- Time?
- Resources?
- Curriculum?
- Training?
- Staff?
- Educator preparation?
- Family participation?
- Physical Barriers?
- Organization of School System?
- Leadership?
- Culture?


Remember the “Blueprint!”

Flex your flexibility!

Now, where does that leave us?
ALWAYS REMEMBER THE ENDGAME

Resources:

- Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules (AFIRM):
  https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/afirm-modules
- Autism Internet Modules (AIM):
  https://autisminternetmodules.org
- National Professional Development Center on ASD Evidence-Based Practices Inventory
  https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/5_EBP%20Inventory_5.2.21_0.pdf
- Organization for Autism Research: An Educators Guide to ASD
  https://researchautism.org/resources/reading/index.asp

Thank you!