FOCUS OF INTERVENTION – ALL AGES

Federal and state laws require that all students have access to, and make progress in, the general curriculum. However, the instruction must be meaningful, purposeful, and age appropriate for the student. The student with ASD will have specific goals and objectives that need to be addressed in order to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.

The following areas have been found to increase the student’s ability to benefit from the educational experience and become more competent and independent adults.

**ATTENTION**

*Purpose – Increase awareness of others, develop appropriate learning processes, establish attention to critical task stimuli, and reduce over-selective attention*

Target Areas:

• \_Acknowledgment of external world

• \_Sustained attention (attending on a regular basis)

• \_Saliency (looking at what is important)

• \_Joint attention (attending with people)

• \_Attention shifting (flexibility in attending) event-to-event, object to object, object to person, and person to object

**IMITATION**

*Purpose – Prepare for learning complex skills, enable observational learning from peers, and build reciprocal interaction*

Target Areas:

• \_Prerequisite to imitative learning is that it must be purposeful and independent

• \_Attention to model: Imitation of movements, vocalizations, verbalizations, and gestures

**COMMUNICATION**

*Purpose – Establish verbal or augmented communication skills; enhance social interaction as an initiator and responder; enhance comprehension of events and persons in the environment; provide appropriate alternatives to challenging behaviors with one to two backup systems*

Target Areas:

• \_Use and comprehend nonverbal communication (gestures, gaze and facial postures)

• \_Use and comprehend primary vocabulary and simple sentence structures

• \_Use and comprehend grammatical-parts of speech

• \_Use and comprehend combined/multiple communicative means

• \_Use communicative means for a variety of reasons (request, protest, comment, repair, etc.)

• \_Use echolalia functionally

• \_Increase use of spontaneous language

• \_Continued vocabulary building, comprehension and use

**SOCIALIZATION**

*Purpose – Development of social competence; develop or enhance capacity for meaningful social contact with others*

Target Areas:

• \_Intentional and systematic introduction to social situations with the ability to initiate and respond

• \_Turn-taking – includes verbal, nonverbal, and activity related action

• \_Adult-child, child-child, and adult-adult interactions

• \_Sharing

• \_Ability to give help and accept help

• \_Choice-making

• \_Understanding other person’s emotions and perspectives (“Theory of Mind”)

**COGNITION**

*Purpose – Enhance conceptual, problem-solving, and academic performance and executive function (flexible, strategic plan of action to solve a problem or attain a future goal)*

Target Areas:

• \_Utilization of multiple modes of learning (e.g., sorting, matching, classifying, problem-solving, categorizing, comparisons, ordinals, sequencing, temporal understanding, spatial understanding)

• \_Understanding cause/effect

• \_Abstract thinking

• \_Humor

• \_Applying and generalizing skills and information

**PURPOSEFUL PLAY/RECREATION/LEISURE**

*Purpose – Enhance cognitive, social and motor skills; enhance relationships between self, others, and environment, and improve appropriate use of unstructured time*

Target Areas:

• \_Intentional and systematic introduction of a variety of play and leisure skills

• \_Interaction/cooperation with peers

• \_Leisure including toys, games, sports, hobbies, creative arts (drama, music, writing, arts and crafts)

• \_Developing life long leisure/recreation skills and practices

**ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS**

*Purpose – Increase personal independence and create opportunities for greater community participation in all areas of life including independent living, employment, leisure /recreation, and education*

Target Areas:

• \_Transitioning within and between daily activities

• \_Functional or daily living skills such as toileting, dressing, food preparation, eating, transportation/mobility, shopping, cleaning

• \_Personal hygiene and health

• \_Safety in community

• \_Managing environmental stressors

• \_Effective communication system for basic needs

• \_Self-determination/ self-advocacy/ self-respect

• \_Respecting others’ rights and property

• \_Goal-oriented: Productivity and completion of task or activity

• \_Flexibility: Ability to accept change within schedule or task

• \_Generalization of skills and knowledge to other environments, people, etc.

ADDITIONAL FOCUS AREAS - AGES 6 THROUGH 21

In addition to the above areas, the following areas should be included in programs for students, ages 6 though 26.

**TRANSITION (See From High School to Adulthood section)**

*Purpose – Facilitate integration of the student into the community in terms of employment/career, post secondary education/ training, independent living (including leisure and recreation)*

Target Areas:

• \_Exploration of areas of interests, preferences, and strengths while identifying areas of need

• \_Identification of specific post-school goals in the areas of employment/career, postsecondary education training, and independent living based on interests and strengths

• \_Development of skills and knowledge for individual post-school goals

• \_Generalization of learned skills and knowledge to the targeted adult environments

**SEXUALITY**

*Purpose – Assist the individual to understand and express sexuality in an appropriate and safe manner (avoid being victimized)*

Target Areas:

• \_Acquire skills such as personal space, turn taking, reciprocity, and conversational skills that assist in the development of friendship

• \_Promote skills that develop and maintain different types of relationships

• \_Develop personal health and hygiene

• \_Develop understanding of concepts of “public” and “private”

• \_Reinforce information/skills that assist in protecting from victimization (i.e., sexual abuse)

• \_Understand physical changes in the body (puberty) and how to manage these changes

• \_Develop/identify appropriate outlets to express sexuality

• \_Awareness of personal safety issues related to sexuality (e.g., sexually transmitted diseases/infections and unwanted sexual advances)

• \_Considerations related to the decision to become sexually active

NOTE: The topic of “challenging behavior” has not been included as a Focus Area. Challenging behavior occurs due to skill deficits or an ineffective support system. Addressing challenging or interfering behaviors requires the development of functional skills as replacements. Therefore, issues related to behavior have been embedded into each focus area through targeted skill development. When behavior is a concern, the first step is to analyze the context in which the behavior occurs through the Functional Behavioral Assessment Process.

References: Campanelli, J., & Ericson, C. (2007). *Twice exceptional guide: Preparing Ohio schools to close the achievement gap for gifted students with disabilities*. Retrieved from http://www.ode.state.oh.us