


Teaching PLAY:
PLAY Project Autism Intervention
in a Classroom Setting

Katie Scott MS, LISW
PLAY and Teaching PLAY Project Consultant
PLAY Training Director
www.playproject.org



1




Teaching PLAY:
PLAY Project Autism Intervention
in a Classroom Setting

Richard Solomon, MD
Ann Arbor Center for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics
Medical Director
The PLAY Project
www.playproject.org





2



Workshop Overview

- Section 1: PLAY & Teaching PLAY Background
- Section 2: What is Teaching PLAY?
- Section 3: Teaching PLAY Model
- Section 4: The 7 Circles of Teaching PLAY
 - Functional Developmental Levels
 - Teaching PLAY Implementation

4

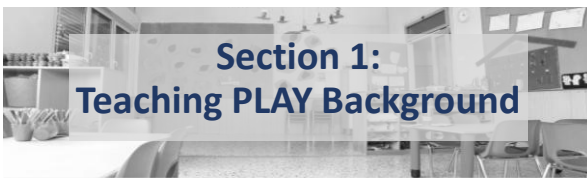


My goals for you today:


- Develop a new lens to understand children with autism
 - What is his/her profile? Based on this profile, what should my expectations be?
- Leave this training with ideas to start implementing these strategies right away
- Feel inspired by videos and excited to try new ways of interacting with your students




5



Section 1:
Teaching PLAY Background



6



Mission & Vision

The PLAY Project's Mission
"To support families in having a joyous and playful relationship with their children with autism spectrum disorders so each child can reach his or her full potential."

PLAY Project's Vision
"To train a global network of pediatric professionals and child development experts to provide The PLAY Project's autism intervention program to as many families as needed."




7



PLAY Autism Intervention

- Evidence-based, parent-mediated, home-based intensive early intervention.
- Monthly home visit with mid-month written feedback.
- 7 Circles of PLAY: Principles and Method are the same as in Teaching PLAY
- *Videotaping* central to the model.
- Coaching, modeling, feedback
- Many of the same elements for TP

8



Parent Implemented Interventions

- Developmental, relationship-based
- Less costly, easily implemented
- Recognized as evidence based by the National Professional Development Center
- Parents as the child's best play partner
- Uses natural environment of the home
- Gain in hours of intervention by making every interaction count (Intensive = 15 hrs/week)

9



The PLAY Project Motto

**“When you do what the child loves,
the child will love to be with you.”**
—Dr. Rick

10



PLAY Autism Intervention



11



NIMH Randomized Controlled Trial

- 3 Year, \$1.85 Million
- Easter Seals & Michigan State University
- RCT, multi-site, blinded study
- 5 ES sites, 64 children per year x 2 years = 128
- Largest study of its kind in US.
- Real world implementation
- Published: *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* Oct, 2014

12



Evidence for PLAY (October, 2014)

- Results of the The PLAY Project Intervention:
1. Consultants show fidelity to the model
 2. PLAY parents interact with more skill.
 3. PLAY parent do NOT suffer more stress and significantly reduced depression
 4. PLAY children improve in their development
 - Better interaction
 - Better functional development
 - Less autism symptomatology

13

Ohio Implementation of PLAY

DODD Funded PLAY Over 3 years (2011-13) in EI

70% of EI Ohio Personnel Trained in PLAY (158 EI Personnel)

Implemented By County Boards

500 Children B-3 and families with ASD served annually

14



15

From PLAY to Teaching PLAY

The PLAY Project 2000-16

PLAY Research 2009-14

PLAY Statewide Ohio EI 2011-13

Teaching PLAY Ohio 2014-15

16

Section 2: What is Teaching PLAY?

Section 2: What is Teaching PLAY?

17

autism affects an estimated **1 in 31** children in the U.S.

autism speaks

18

Autism Information

- About 1 percent of the world population has autism spectrum disorder.
- More than 3.5 million Americans live with an autism spectrum disorder.
- ASD is about 4 times more common among boys than among girls (1 in 27 boys, 1 in 116 girls)
- ASD is reported to occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.
- Research indicates that genetics are involved in the vast majority of cases.
- Children born to older parents are at a higher risk for having autism.
- Parents who have a child with ASD have a 2 to 18 percent chance of having a second child who is also affected.

* Information found on Autism Speaks and CDC websites

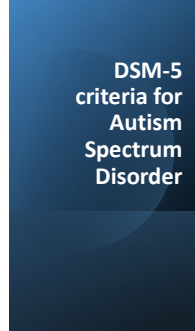
19



Autism In The Schools

- Autism on the rise, affecting school systems
- More children with ASD in the classroom
- No standard protocol for intervention across diverse classroom environments
- Several Pedagogical Approaches to ASD: TEACCH, PECS, ABA, SCERTS

20



21

Currently, or by history, must meet criteria A, B, C and D

- A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across contexts, not accounted for by general developmental delays, and manifested by all 3 of the following:**
1. Deficits in social emotional reciprocity
 2. Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction
 3. Deficits in developing and maintaining relationships
- B. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities as manifested by at least two of the following:**
1. Stereotyped repetitive speech, motor movements, or use of objects
 2. excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior, or excessive resistance to change
 3. highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal and intense or focus
 4. Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or usual interest in sensory aspects of environment;
- C. Symptoms must be present in early childhood (but may not become fully manifested until social demands exceed limited capacities)**
- D. Symptoms together limit and impair everyday functioning**



What is Teaching PLAY (TP)?

A school staff training program, derived from The PLAY Project autism intervention program, re-designed for the preschool and kindergarten classroom setting

Focusing on increasing social engagement throughout the school day for children with ASD and/or other developmental delays

22



Teaching PLAY

- Focuses on social INTERACTION, leading to learning readiness
- Values fun, playfulness, and joy in learning
- Is NOT a curriculum, but a developmental lens to apply in any educational environment
- Does NOT interfere with usual pre-school teaching practices

"Engagement leads to educational readiness."

23



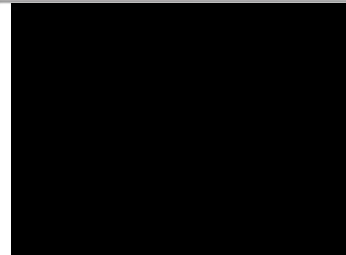
Group Discussion

- What changes did you see in Tatum?
- What changes did you see in the Teaching staff?
- What stood out to you in these videos?

24



Tatum Before/After - Preschool



25



Teaching PLAY Asher Before/After - Preschool



27

Teaching PLAY Why Teaching PLAY?

- Children with autism learn differently
 - both from typical children
 - and from children with cognitive impairments
- Fundamental differences of social communication and compliance due to . . .
- “Holes” in their developmental functional skills,
 - Attention and engagement
 - initiation
 - problem solving
 - symbolic thinking

28

Teaching PLAY Why Teaching PLAY?

Often when schools focus on traditional academic content, children with ASD:

- Have poor compliance
- Do not achieve IEP goals
- Get frustrated and often misbehave
- IEP becomes a source of disappointment for both schools and parents

29

Teaching PLAY Why Teaching PLAY?

If we don't address the core differences in social communication—
 Children with ASD
WILL NOT LEARN AS WELL
Teaching PLAY focuses on social functioning

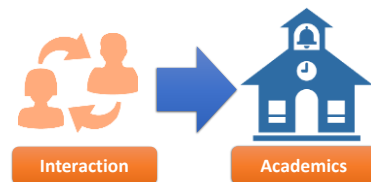
30

Teaching PLAY Why Teaching PLAY?



31

Teaching PLAY Interaction Promotes Academic Readiness for Children with ASD



32



Process vs Content



33



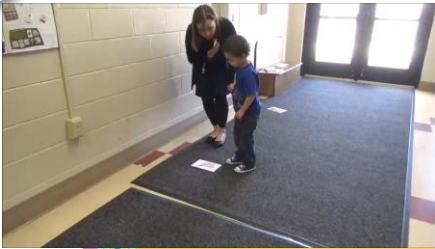
Process vs Content



34



Process vs. Content



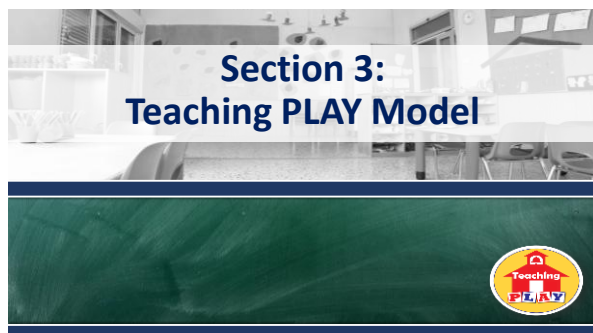
35



BRAIN BREAK!

The Crab

36



37



Teaching PLAY Model

- Initial Teaching PLAY workshop – full day
- 6 half-day classroom visits – coaching, modeling, feedback
- 1st in-service – watch video from 1st visit and create child profile as a team
- Final in-service – reflect on the year and plan for the following year
- Parent Night presentation (optional)
- Assessments: PLAY School Environment Checklist, Greenspan S/E growth chart, Functional Developmental Level percentages

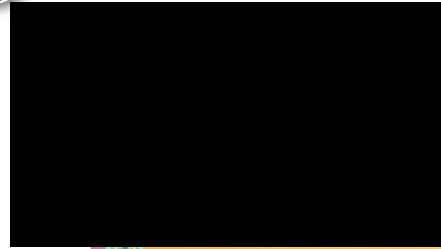
38

Small Group Discussion

- Did you see progress in Solon over the 3 years?
 - Toddler Room (8 children, under 3 yrs old)
 - Transition Room (IEP, 8 children all on IEPs)
 - Preschool Classroom (16 children, 8 on IEPs, 2 Peer models, 6 Head Start)
- Did anything stand out to you about the teaching staff (Teachers, assistants, OT, PT, SLP, Me) who were in the videos? What were their interactions like? What did they do that was effective?

42

Solon Before/After (2017-2020)

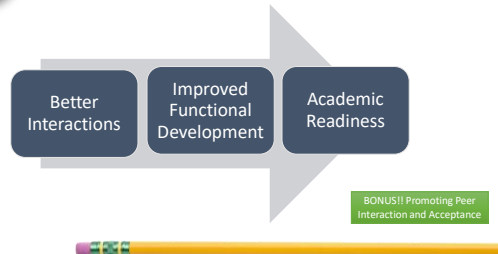


43

Section 4: The 7 Circles of Teaching PLAY

44

Teaching PLAY Vision & Goals



45

7 Circles of Teaching PLAY



46

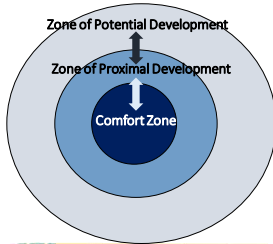
Circle 1: 4 Principles

- Fun with people—Doing what the child loves
- Put in the time—2 hours per day broken up into 15-20 minute sessions (“intensity”)
 - Schools: Make every interaction a good interaction
 - Contributes to ‘intensity’ esp. if parents doing it too
- Accurately profile the child in terms of their Comfort Zone, Sensory-Motor Profile & Functional Developmental Levels
- Based on child’s profile, play at the right level

47



Reaching the Student's Potential



48



Coltrane –Intentional Interactions and FUN



49



PLAY Methods

1. **Read the child's cues** to find out what he/she wants
2. Slow the pace of play, **observe and wait** for the child's idea
3. **Follow the child's idea/intention**, responding to what the child wants
4. Open and close **circles of communication** (back and forth interactions)
5. **Build** on the child's interests

50



Reading Subtle Cues



51



Slow down and wait (giving Janet a "chance" to communicate)



52



Rosie - SLOWING down and WAITING



53



Why follow the child's lead?

- Connects with the child's feeling life
- Improves the relationship
- Increases engagement
- Leads to meaningful learning
- Reduces self-isolation
- Helps child become independent thinker and problem-solver

54



Following Kayden's Lead



55



Leading vs. Following

- Prompt vs. 'Woo'
- Lead vs. Follow
- Prescribed vs. Open ended
- Compliance vs. Engagement
- Behavioral vs. Functional Development
- Educational Goals vs Relationship Goals

56



PLAY Methods: Circles

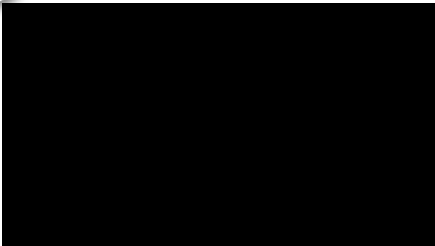
Circles of Communication

- The basic unit of interaction engagement
- "Responsiveness"/Span of engagement vs. "Perseveration"/Span of disengagement
- Opening (initiating) and Closing (responding)
- Main task of interaction to increase engagement: the number and quality (higher FDLs) of connected circles

57



Circles with Carly



58



Thinking "circles" during academics



59

Teaching PLAY Circles with Bryce



60

Teaching PLAY Kaia circles – and peer!



61

Teaching PLAY Building on Interests - Valor



62

Teaching PLAY PLAY Methods: How It Looks

- Face to face
- Pay attention to the child's attention and intention
- Slow your pace and rhythm
- Silence is OK. Wait!!
- Think 'circles'
- Extend circles, go for 'flow'
- Expand on the child's idea using theme and variation
- Use high affect to promote engagement

64

Teaching PLAY

BRAIN BREAK!
Ear & Nose Switch



65

7 Circles of Teaching PLAY



66



Circle 2: Child Profile

- Consists of:
 - ✓ **Comfort Zone**
 - ✓ **Sensory Motor Profile**
 - ✓ **Functional Developmental Levels**
- Provides the basis for individualized PLAY Plan

67



The "Rabbit Hole"

- The "Rabbit Hole" is our metaphor for the self isolation caused by the perseverative, repetitive, restrictive, and stereotypical behaviors characteristically exhibited by children with autism spectrum disorders.
- When children are in their "rabbit hole," it seems like they don't want to be part of the world.
- Perseverative and stereotypical behaviors are not "bad." They are a form of comfort that the child uses to keep their world familiar and safe. In the PLAY Project, we call these behaviors Comfort Zone (CZ) activities.

69



Comfort Zone

- CZ activities help the child to regulate (self-calm) in a chaotic world; however, they may become habits which keeps the child isolated (i.e. in their "rabbit hole").
- 'Joining' a child in their CZ allows for engagement (FDL 2) and as engagement increases, the perseverative and repetitive behaviors naturally decrease. This is the goal of the "Rabbit Hole" Techniques
- Comfort Zones:
 - What the child with ASD will do when left alone
 - Focused on repetitive interests
 - Often in their own world, not 'with us'

70



Comfort Zone Activities

- Lining up blocks, trains, cars, trucks, dolls
- Turning on and off lights
- Water play/flushing toilets/watching water
- Watching blinds/edges/ spinning things
- Licking, mouthing, smelling
- Watching Paw Patrol, Thomas, etc
- Playing on the iPad/tablet
- Flipping through books
- Holding objects in his/her hands
- Humming/making noises
- Deep pressure/spinning/swinging
- Running back and forth, wandering

71



Comfort Zone



72



RHT – Help him do it better



73

Circle 2: Sensory Motor Profile

- The unique way a child experiences the world through the various sensory modalities and movement.
- Self regulation: The ability (or inability!) to stay calm and attentive (i.e. regulated) during social interactions
- How can we use the child's sensory motor profile to support regulation (FDL 1) and promote engagement and interaction (FDL 2 & 3)? What do we need to do more of? Less of?
- A child's sensory behaviors shows you what their body is seeking/needing in the moment. Observe the child to see what kind of input they are seeking. How can you insert yourself or provide this input?

74

Joining sensory-seeking play



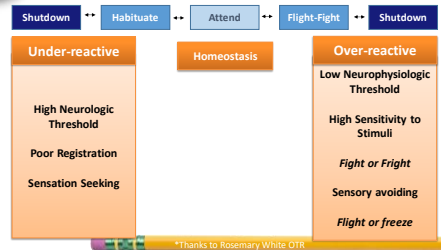
75

A child's ability to process & interpret:

1. **Visual** - sights around them. Often the hardest to join. Avoid bright lights/screens (hard to compete!)
2. **Auditory** -sounds around them. Music? Silly sounds? Loud vs. Soft. Hums?
3. **Gustatory** - tastes (e.g. food/drink).
4. **Olfactory** - smells
5. **Tactile** - touch (i.e. the feeling of objects, etc.). Avoid textures/clothing? Like sand or water play? Messy play? Tickers?
6. **Proprioceptive** - input through their muscles & joints. Like deep pressure? Crashing into things, jumping, banging on items?
7. **Vestibular** - where they are located in space. Body movement – spinning, swinging. Like upside-down?

76

Sensory Modulation Continuum* (Self Regulation)



78

SMP Support (Paul)



79

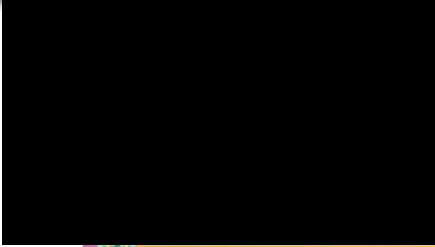
Jeremiah – rewing him up



80



The Power of Sensory Motor Play (Jack)



82



Sensory in schools

- “Sensory” does not just mean tactile sensory play such as sensory bin play and PlayDoh.
- Think about the child’s **WHOLE** body. Observe the child – what are they doing? What type of input are they seeking? How can you help provide this input?
- In schools, we are typically hands-off children unless we are trying to get them to do something/take them somewhere. Explore touch in a way that you are comfortable with and try to build moments of connection. For example, tickles, high-fives, deep pressure, moving their arms to songs, etc. As always, read the child’s cues.
- Connect with your OT and explore activities that can be done within the classroom.

83

LUNCH!

Send me any lingering questions via chat... see you at 1pm!



84



85



Circle 2: Functional Developmental Levels

- Greenspan and Weider DIR Theoretical Framework
- Functional emotional development how a child functions in relationships
- Based on typical child development
- Measures social-emotional milestones
- Functional developmental stage vs chronological age

86



Functional Development

- Most children with ASD have ‘holes’ at the lower functional levels
- Prevent them from functioning at higher abstract levels.
- If the child is ‘holey’ we must repair the holes.
- Developmental ‘ladder’
 - Move up and down the ladder as needed.
 - Follow the child
- Rate each FDL: 0-25% (some), 25-50% (some-half), 50-75% (half-most) 75-100% (most-all)

87



Circle 2: 6 Functional Developmental Levels

Shared Attention & Self-regulation (FDL 1)

Engagement (FDL 2)

Two way Communication (FDL 3)

Complex two-way Communication (FDL 4)

Shared Meanings & Symbolic Play (FDL 5)

Emotional Thinking (FDL 6)

*Based on Developmental, Individualized, Relationship-based (DIR) Model, Greenspan & Weider

88



Functional Developmental Level 1

Self Regulation & Shared Attention (Begins birth to 3 months)

- Can remain calm and regulated enough to share attention with people.
 - Can sustain brief episodes of interaction.
- Regulation derailed by *Comfort Zone* activities.
 - Stimming, scripting, lining up, etc. remove attention
 - When you see CZ, child has holes in FDL 1
- Key Question: How much is the child with us?
- Where is the child's attention? What is the child's intention?
- Use 'The Rabbit Hole Techniques' to join the child at FDL 1

89



Functional Developmental Level 2

Engagement & Relating (Begins between 2-7 months)

- More sustained attention = engagement
- You call to them and they look. Circles begin!!
- Peek a boo is the classic FDL 2 game
- Key Question: How easy is it to engage the child?
- This is the 'sweat' level. The parent/professional has to do the work (i.e. sweat) to keep the child engaged
- Hard to follow lead but you can! (See Rabbit Hole Techniques)
- Watch out for visual activities.
- Use 'Comfort Zone' technique.

90



Functional Developmental Level 3

Two Way Communication & Intentionality
(Begins between 3-10 months)

- Opening and closing of 3-5+ circles.
- Key activities: Simple cause and effect games.
- Key Question: Is the child initiating?
- We want to 'create a monster' (i.e. child won't leave you alone!)
- This is the 'wait' level. The parent/professional has to wait to see if the child will initiate (i.e. open circles)
- Beginning of understanding routines
- Beginning of first single words

91



Waylon



92



Maggie



93



Janet



94



Functional Developmental Level 4

Complex Two Way Communication, Social Problem-Solving & Mood Regulation (Begins between 9-18 months)

- Problem solver! Has his/her own ideas.
- Gestural communication primarily with dozens of words.
- Opening and closing of 10-30 circles.
- Simple pretend: Phone to ear. Cow says 'Moo'.
- Much more 'with us'. Continuous flow of interaction
- Imitation.
- Follows spontaneous 1 step commands: Go, get, give to...
- 'Little stories': 'Gets' meaningful sequences.
- Parallel play with peers/sibs
- Feelings more and more organized

96



Functional Developmental Level 5

Shared Meanings, Creating Symbols & Using Words and Ideas (Begins between 24-30 months)

- Major increase in receptive language and understanding
- One thematic pretend play with adults
- Mostly 1-2 word phrases
- What, Where, Who, Actions, Yes/No
 - Not Why, When, or Pronouns
- Continued parallel play with peers
- Follows 2-3 step commands.
- Manners emerging.
- Sense of humor emerging
- Compliance: Starting to do what others want them to

98



Functional Developmental Level 6

Emotional Thinking, Logic & Sense of Reality (Begins between 36-48 months)

- Talking in sentences
- Asks and answers 'Why' questions
- Can recall the immediate past.
- Builds bridges between ideas
 - Identifies own and others' feelings
 - Recognizes relationship between feeling, behavior and consequences
- Two thematic play
- Carries on simple conversations
- Peer play established.
- Misbehavior as developmental accomplishment

100



Pretend PLAY (Bjorn)



101

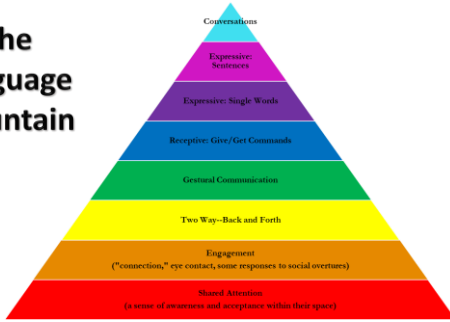


Logan - Empathy



102

The Language Mountain



103



104

BRAIN BREAK! Gotcha!

106

Case Study Kaia

Small Group Discussion

At what Functional Developmental Level(s) is Kaia functioning in this first clip?

Does anything else stand out about her profile?

107

Case Study - Kaia

108

Teaching PLAY Implementation

109

7 Circles of Teaching PLAY



110

Circle 3: Techniques and Activities

- Techniques and activities answer the question: "What can I do to get more engagement and more fun?"
- We have 40 different techniques*
 - For FDL 1-4
 - For FDL 4-6
- Activities answer the question: "What would be fun for my student?"
- We individualize techniques and activities based on the child's profile.

111



Circle 3: Techniques

The Purpose of the Techniques:

- Provide parents and professionals with ideas for engagement
- Improve initiative & flexibility
- Increase numbers & complexity of circles of communication
- Improve ability to solve problems
- Promote fun, silly, engaging interactions!

112



Circle 3: Techniques

Techniques For FDL 1-4	Techniques For FDL 4-6
Being with	Add a step
Narrating	Salient language
Taffy pulling	Big, little, and micro circles
Change the sensory modality	Mirroring feelings
Suspense and surprise	Simple pretend
Playful obstruction	Wh-questions
Theme and Variation	Thematic pretend

113



Keeper of the Pieces (Max)



114



Taffy Pulling/Playful Obstruction (Paul)



115





Add A Circle (Jacob)



116



Rabbit Hole Technique



117



Theme and Variation



118



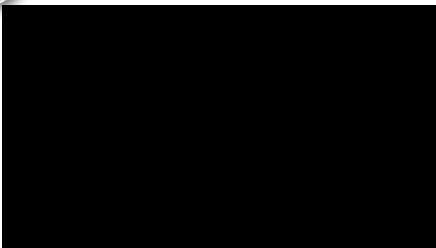
Expectant Waiting (Asher)



119



Making Him Work (Aalijah)



120



Peer using PLAY techniques (Carly)



121

Circle 3: Activities

LEVELS 1 & 2
Sensory/Cause and Effect

- Gently shaking arms or legs
- Gently squeezing arms, leg, head.
- Rolling child up in a rug
- Swinging in a blanket

LEVELS 3 & 4
Sequences/Simple Pretend

- Chase: "I'm gonna get you"
- Get the bubbles, balloon, etc.
- Ball play (rolling it back and forth)

LEVELS 5 & 6
1&2 Theme Pretend

- Simple pretend: Big mouth puppets monster chase
- More complex pretend: dress up, crashing cars, tea party, dolly sleeping
- Games with rules: Duck, duck, goose

122

Reflection

Write down 3 specific things you want to remember from today's training that you've learned so far. What stands out to you?

123

BRAIN BREAK!

Snowball

124

7 Circles of Teaching PLAY

125

Circle 4: Coaching, Modeling, Feedback

- Teaching PLAY Consultants visit the classroom
- Coaching, Modeling, Feedback
- Video Taping
- Emphasis on analyzing child's profile
- Using PLAY principles, methods, techniques and activities during ALL interactions throughout the school day.

126

Coaching - Allie

127



Modeling



128



Circle 5: Engagement in the Classroom

Child-led play sessions:

- 10-15 minute periods throughout the day
- Free play promotes functional development
- Adult follows child's lead to facilitate engagement, two way communication, initiation, problem solving
- "Make every interaction a good interaction"

Adult-led tasks:

- Adult reads child's cues and follow the child's lead within every interaction, even when directing a task
- Focus on relationship, contingent communication, and initiation as well as problem solving

129



Circle 6: Feedback and Support

- After-visit meetings with video reviews
- In-service sessions for more in-depth discussion
- Teaching PLAY Binder, including training materials with ideas for techniques and activities by FDL

130



Circle 7: Change and Growth

- Update the Child Profile throughout the year
- Use new techniques and activities as child changes
- Create IEP goals that are appropriate for the child's Functional Developmental Level, rather than chronological age.

131



Case Study - Camden

What do you notice about his affect?

How are his interactions with adults? Peers?

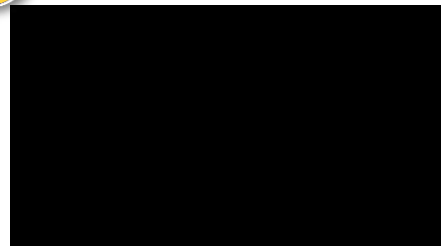
What FDLs do you see?

Where would you start?

132



Case study - Camden



133



Case Study - Camden

What do you notice about his affect?

How are his interactions with adults? Peers?

What FDLs do you see?

What do you think worked?



134



Camden 2019-20

Initial visit (10/3/19):

At the beginning of the year, Camden is well-regulated and easy to engage. He uses a device to communicate, although usually need prompted and only uses a few select words. He complies with adult directive and follows the classroom routine. The classroom team reports that he is a very "serious" guy who seems to focus on compliance and making sure he is doing what he is supposed to do. He has a few peers that he tends to gravitate towards and will occasionally interact with. He seems to rely on prompts throughout the day to communicate and follow the classroom routine. This year, the classroom team would like to focus on increasing independence, encouraging problem-solving, and fostering silliness/humor with Camden.

Final visit (2/20/20):

Camden is now attempting to verbalize single words when prompted. He is also exploring and using his device to communicate more independently (Ex - What did you have for breakfast? Camden responded, "strawberries" on his device). The team has really worked on prompting less and increasing expectations of Camden. He has become sillier and enjoys laughing and being goofy with adults and peers. Camden is playing with a variety of peers now. Although pretend play is limited, he tends to do well with structured tasks. His favorite seems to be songs during whole group. He imitates most motor movements during songs (after lots of repetition). Camden understands some "wh" questions and can follow some 2-step commands. Overall, Camden is more confident in himself and has become more independent. He is also more interactive with peers.



135



Be Intentional, Curious, and Purposeful

- Be intentional about **going after** your students. Spend time doing what THEY want to do and discover their interests. What is **FUN** for them??
- Be intentional about going for **moments**. Even 3-5 seconds of slowing down and having a "moment" can truly make a difference.
- Explore the "Why" behind behaviors and interests – **be curious!**
- Adapt your approach and expectations to **meet your students' individual needs**. Consider your expectations – are they too high? Not high enough? What is the **purpose?**
- Please feel encouraged to let go of the academic pressures and allow time for **building relationships and trust**. When trust is established, children are more willing to be engaged with us, and that is when learning will happen!



136



Summary

- **New ways of interacting with children with ASD**
- **Children with ASD don't learn like other children**
- **Content-oriented IEP goals only address part of child's learning needs**
- **Need to focus on functional development**
- **Teaching PLAY is a new way to change the classroom culture without changing the classroom structure**
- **Focus on INTERACTION and ENGAGEMENT: "Think Circles!!"**
- **Interaction leads to academic readiness**



137



Thank you!!

Questions or comments??

Please visit www.playproject.org for more info



"Autism: The Potential Within"

By: Dr. Richard Solomon



138