Inquiry Project: Summary of Articles

Cheryl Rasi

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Communication is an essential aspect of education. Children with autism often have trouble developing the necessary communication skills to succeed in the classroom. Each child with autism has different capabilities and challenges. Addressing these challenges and providing support can help to increase the child’s probability of succeeding. The articles that I read provide information on different ways to incorporate the needs of a child with autism into a classroom.

The first article by Glen Dunlap and Lise Fox provides different ideas that teachers may want to take into consideration when teaching students with autism. Some of these considerations include the child’s health, the structure of the classroom, and the transition to new placements. Since children with autism have difficulty with communication, it is important to provide a classroom environment that clearly displays the rules, activities and events that occur from day to day. The article also discusses the need for motivation to help students with autism to gain the most from the instruction. One way to determine the best materials or activities to use with the student is to ask family members. Along with this suggestion, it is also advised to provide the student with “personally meaningful reinforcement.” There are different effective instructional formats for teaching students with autism. These instructional formats include discrete trial training and activity-based instruction. Discrete trial training uses highly structured, one-to-one format. During the instruction the goals are concise and clear. Activity-based instruction plants skills in student’s minds so they can use the general skills in specific situations. Positive behavior support is a technique used to monitor disruptive behavior in the classroom. This support system involves FBA or functional behavioral assessment.
This allows teachers to determine to behavior prior to the disruptive behavior. This is useful because teachers can then determine the cues from the student to allow the teacher to prevent the disruptive behavior.

Another article provides an introduction to applied behavior analysis. Applied behavior analysis is an instructional strategy that provides students with autism the acceleration of the many different aspects of an education. The article provides a list of journals that people have written about the use of applied behavior analysis. Another article that is summarized later in this paper discusses applied behavior analysis in further detail.

Facilitating friendships is the topic of the next article. As many people know, friendships are an important aspect of education and growing up. Denise M. Clark and Stephen W. Smith discuss ways to facilitate friendships with children who have autism. One of the first steps to making the classroom a supportive environment is to prepare the physical environment. The environment allows children to interact with each other and learn from each other. The presence of word and symbol cards can help remind all students to share and cooperate with each other. The classroom schedule should be posted where all children can see it especially students with autism who find security in routines. As in all classrooms, the classroom rules should also be posted where the whole class can see them. Creating positive attitudes is another important step in facilitating friendships in a classroom. Teachers may find it beneficial to talk with the students about the differences between the students as well as the importance of the students in the classroom with autism. Improving social skills allows both typical peers and students with autism to practice newly learned skills. These skills can include turn taking, asking
for help and initiating conversations. This article provides many tips for teachers who have classes with students with autism. All of these tips can help improve the classroom atmosphere and help students with autism gain the most from their education.

Thomas Oren and Billy T. Olgetree researched the use of program process evaluation in classrooms with students with autism. This process is used to determine the progress of a student’s outcome and to evaluate the programs process in order to improve the program. They also discuss the use of goal attainment scaling (GAS). This allows for the measurement of the objectives or outcomes of a program in an individual manner. The remaining part of the article discusses experiments and the use of GAS. This article emphasizes the use of GAS as a service that should be provided to children in order to improve the program that they are participating in. I agree with them totally. I feel that in order to make a child’s education successful, something must be done to ensure that the teaching process is successful. One way to ensure that a child with autism is gaining all the knowledge that they can is through applied behavior analysis.

As mentioned before, applied behavior analysis is important to academic instruction to children with autism. The article by Glen Dunlap, Lee Kern and Jonathan Worcester emphasizes the use of ABA in two different ways. The first way is through antecedent interventions. This allows for the change in environment rather than a change in the student. This process is described as “proactive and preventive.” The authors provide some tips on how to provide antecedent intervention. One such way is to modify the task size or the duration of the task. Many students with autism can only focus for so long on a task and therefore if the task is shorter then the more successful the student will be. An alternative to this could be to provide the student with break during the task.
They also suggest having assignments that are interesting to the student. This will help them to stay on task. Promoting appropriate classroom behavior can also be gained by providing the student with opportunities to make choices in their education. The second use of ABA is through curriculum-based assessment or CBA. CBA is defined as “any set of procedures that use direct observation and recording of a student’s performance in the local curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions.” CBA can be used to determine any skills or deficits that a student may be having. This is done through examining the natural setting of the classroom and the role that it plays in the child’s education. The most cited form of CBA is curriculum-based measurement or CBM. CBM is used to measure the fluency in “reading, mathematics, spelling, and written expression.” It is used to make teachers aware of a sharp drop in a student’s performance. This can be very useful to teachers in inclusion classrooms because they can keep track of the student’s performance and make the necessary changes to help the student in any way that they can. This article provides a great deal of information on how to best teach children with autism. I know that I would use both of these methods in my classroom if I have a student with autism.

Cognitive behavior management is the topic of the next article. This article briefly reviews the concept of CBM and also provides a program for teachers to use in a class with a child who has autism. The first step in implementing this program is to identify the problem and reinforcers as well as prepare the materials. In order to target the behavior problem, it is suggested to target one behavior that fall into one of the following classes: “behaviors that need to be decreased, behaviors that need to be increased and behaviors that need to be maintained.” The next step is to identify
reinforcers. This can be done by taking a survey, trial and error or simply asking the parents what works. Preparing the materials is the next step. The materials that are needed include a timing device, self-management tools and a data collection sheet. Each of these materials is important to the process of implementing the CBM. Allowing the students to become aware of his or her behavior or discrimination training is another step in CBM. The student is asked to look at pictures of them engaged in the appropriate or inappropriate behavior. They are then asked to evaluate their actions and mark them on their self-management sheet. One of the final steps in CBM is to train the students in self-management through modeling by the teacher. The student is then placed in self-management on their own. This process allows students to examine their own behavior and make the modifications that need to be made. Consequently, the students will spend more time learning instead of being disrupted.

All of these articles concentrate on the improvement of academic settings for children with autism. Each article presents their own information while all the articles are interrelated by topic. This allows readers to gain as much knowledge about a topic as they can. Each article provides unique information that may not be found in the other articles. Some of the articles only provide references to other articles while others provide in depth information on how to implement some of the information into a classroom. Most of the information in all the articles is simple enough for any reader to gain information that they are looking for. I found that some of the articles were more focused on what I was looking to research. The others provided me with other places to look or information not included in the articles that I was reviewing. Although some
articles were sparse, I found that each article provided me with knowledge to help myself and others learn about strategies that will help children with autism learn.
References


