



Florida Department of Education

PEPSA

Partnership for Effective Programs for Students with Autism



PEPSA 2009-2010

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Keys to Increasing Use of Visual Supports for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The purpose of this project was to educate the faculty and staff at HRES on the nature of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), to lay the foundation for future increased use of visual supports and incorporation of the student's preferred interest. Based on questions and comments by faculty, there was a clear need for increased knowledge about this complex disability, as well as a need to clarify the role and responsibility of all adults contributing to the education of these students and providing transactional support in the areas of social communication and emotional regulation.

Initially, permission was obtained from the parents of three students with ASD for observation and exchange of information. One kindergarten student's goal focused on increasing self regulation of emotion by teaching him to label several emotions and identify situations that connected to those feelings. Weekly team meetings including one of the student's Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers, the CARD Staff Partner, an ESE student intern, and the speech language pathologist (SLP) were held to solve ways to increase this student's ability to identify and regulate his own feelings, transition through his daily activities more independently, and prevent aggressive and noncompliant behavior toward others through the use of transactional support. One focus of the team meetings was to increase the knowledge base of the instructional aides that work throughout the school-day to support the academic success of several students with ASD.

Two other students identified, a first and a second grader, both demonstrated higher decoding than reading comprehension ability. These students received ESE resource instruction in the small group for academics and had Individual Educational Plan (IEP) goals targeting listening and reading comprehension, initiation of social interactions, and emotional regulation. The CARD Staff Partner shared three articles about reading comprehension and writing strategies. The ESE teacher described the difficulty both of these students had in academics and transitioning within the school day when changes to the routine occurred.

A Power Point presentation was created and presented to small teams (e.g., instructional aides, general education first grade teachers) which included examples of eye gaze, joint attention, pointing, sharing of preferred interests by a student with ASD, and a personalized visual support for one student addressing self emotional regulation. Staff were engaged and interested in the topic. They asked questions and shared personal anecdotes. Future plans include use of video modeling with typical peers, Power Point books, social stories, and comic strip conversations to teach social communication skills. Unfortunately, the kindergarten student transferred to another school, but may return in the future. The second grade student has erratic attendance, but hopefully this will change for the better.