

Fact Sheet

Educating Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Effective Interventions

The key to any child's educational program is the goals and objectives specified in the child's Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) or Individual Education Program (IEP) and the ways they address:

- What skills and behaviors to teach
- How to teach those skills and behaviors
- How you will know that your teaching is effective

There is consistent agreement around kinds of skills that should be addressed, though many differences exist between philosophy and practice that provide a wide range of alternatives for parents and school systems considering various approaches. All interventions must be built on evidence-based practices and must include ongoing data collection and evaluation. Effective interventions must be comprehensive and of sufficient intensity (e.g. amount of time per day/session) to yield meaningful outcomes for the child or youth.

Some of the instructional strategies that are effective for children and youth with ASD are relatively complex and demand sufficient training and practice to achieve fluency. Research on effective program components is rapidly expanding; policy makers and practitioners should review current research continuously.

IEPs and IFSPs of children with ASD should address ALL of the following needs:

1. Functional, spontaneous communication. Effective teaching techniques for both verbal language and alternative modes of communication should be taken from scientific research-based practices and applied across settings.
2. Social interaction with peers and adults. Social instruction should be delivered throughout the day in various settings, using specific activities and interventions planning to meet age-appropriate social goals.
3. Appropriate play skills, based on age and peer groups.
4. Attending, imitation and other functional cognitive and academic skills.
5. Appropriate behavior, using functional, positive behavior interventions and supports.

Educating Children with Autism (2001). National Academy Press.
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