



## Universal Approach to Programming for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Blending TEACCH and ABA

Virginia Council of Administrators of Special Education  
May 24, 2007

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## Improving Teaching and Learning

For all the controversy surrounding issues of instructional methodology for children with autism spectrum disorder, let's agree that we all care about student achievement and improving instruction



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## Organization Theory



- Demonstrates that when applied to schools, continuous, structured, teacher collaboration improves
  - Quality of Instruction
  - Student Learning
  - Professional Morale
- Applies to special education

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## Relationship to Special Education



- How do we use the information gathered through good research and use it effectively in the classroom?
- Are teachers communicating what works in the classroom to other teachers?
- What strategies can be incorporated into the classroom and how can teacher training be most effective?

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## Popular Notion

- Is it really one size fits all ~ ABA or TEACCH?
- Is this believable with such a broad spectrum of characteristics?
- In fact, no one method has proven itself to be the "best practice" for all children with autism (Simpson, 2004; Gershon, 1999)



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## Common Teaching Methodologies

- TEACCH
- ABA / AVB
- PECS
- Floortime/DIR
- RDI
- Inclusion
- Social Stories / Comic Strip Conversations / Power Cards
- Others



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## Implication to Special Education

- Develop and use comprehensive innovative instructional approaches
- Provide data and research behind educational decisions
- Share information with non-educators
- Let me tell you a story.....



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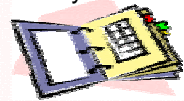
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## Brief History of Behavior Theory

- Behaviorism~stimulus-response psychology
- Respondent and operant conditioning
- Basic principles of behavior theory
  - Reinforcement
  - Prompting
  - Fading
  - Schedules of reinforcements, etc
- *Verbal Behavior*-Skinner in 1957
- *The ME Book*-Lovaas in 1960's



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## Understand the Distinction

- Pure Behavioral Science
- Applied Behavioral Science



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## Common Components of Applied Behavioral Analysis

- Direct one to one instruction
- Defined target behavior with task analysis
- Functional behavior analysis to determine appropriate reinforcement
- Systematical reinforcement to increase desired behavior



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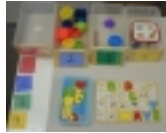
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## Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children

### TEACCH

#### Major priorities include:

- Centering on the individual
- Understanding autism ("the culture of autism," suggesting that people with autism are part of a distinctive group with common characteristics )
- Adopting appropriate adaptations
- Building intervention strategies on existing skills and/or interests



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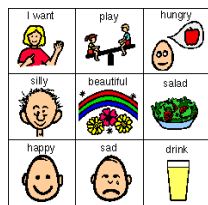
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## Basic TEACCH Strategies

- Organization of physical environment
- Development of communication skills
- Promotion of strengths and interests
- Fostering social and leisure interests
- Independence skills



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**Gary Mesibov, Director of TEACCH at the UNC:**

*"The difference is what we teach. ABA-Lovaas is teaching the more 'normal' model of development and functioning, while we at TEACCH are trying to expand around the differences. Both are looking for development and progress, but the emphases are different. The other big difference between us - and it's not talked about as frequently as the philosophical difference - is that the major concept behind ABA and discreet trial training is that reinforcement is the main trigger for development and learning. My argument is that, if a thing makes sense to a child, if they understand it, then it is going to promote that child's learning most effectively. It's a real challenge for anyone - especially someone with autism."*

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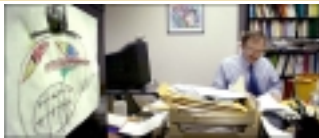
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**Gary Mesibov continues:**



*"If you put me up against Dr Lovaas or any ABA person and say: 'You have one chance to work with this child, and whoever works most effectively wins the battle,' what they would try and find is the most powerful reinforcement, whereas I would try and get a concept to make sense to the child, try to communicate understanding."*

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**Understand the Distinction**

- TEACCH focuses on the desired behavior or **Antecedent** Control of behavior, the first part of ABC
- ABA emphasizes reinforcement or **Consequence**, the second part of ABC



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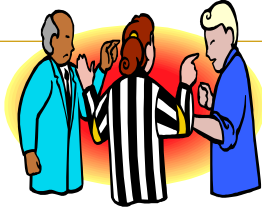
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## Why is This a Battle to See Who Could be Most Effective with Only One Approach?



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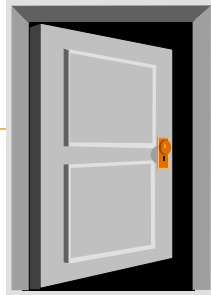
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## QUESTIONS WORTHY OF DISCUSSION

*Opening the Door to Understanding*



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## Questions To Ponder

- Should people working with children with autism understand the characteristics the individual displays?
- Would learning be enhanced with the environment organized for better understanding using visual strategies?
- Should people working with a behaviorally defined disorder understand the basic application of behavioral principles?
- If a child is not learning skills in group settings, should we use systematic one to one instruction broaden the skill acquisition?

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## Additional Questions

- Would adding the visual strategies suggested by TEACCH interfere with systematic instruction of ABA?
- Would intensive one to one instruction of ABA to learn new skills interfere with understanding necessary for TEACCH?
- Do we have to choose between independence and one to one instruction?

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## Concerns Regarding Each Approach



- Some say that ABA creates robot like behavior that is not generalized to the real world
- Some say that TEACCH focuses too much on independence and does not increase skill mastery

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## Blending: How Do We Do It?

- **TEACCH suggests:**
  - Essential understanding of the characteristics of autism and learning
  - Visual presentation of instructional materials
  - Teaching independent learning
  - Individual student schedules
  - Advancement of student's strengths
  - Development of a concept o "finished"



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## Blending: How Do We Do It?

### ■ ABA suggests:

- Task analysis of complex tasks
- Frequent 1:1 instruction
- Systematic reinforcement
- Functional analysis of problem behaviors
- Measurable long term goals and short term objectives
- Analysis of data periodically
- Generalization of skills



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## Data to Support the Use of Blended Approach

### ■ Timothy School three year study: Significant student improvement in

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|------------------|-------------------|
| Gross Motor      | General Knowledge |
| Fine Motor       | Reading Readiness |
| Self Help        | Basic Reading     |
| Speech/Lang.     | Writing           |
| Social/Emotional | Math              |

### ■ Timothy School PA Alternative Assessment

- Exceeded State average in Reading and Math in 5 out of 6 grade levels for the 2005-2006 school year
- Exceeded State average in Reading and Math in 2 out of 3 grade levels for the 2004-2005 school year

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## How We Did It: Continuous Staff Development

- Understanding of behavior
- Using effective instructional strategies
- Drawing on teacher collaboration
- Employing promising practices
- Utilizing data for correction



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## Facts, Inferences and Perspectives



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## Remember: They're All Worth It!



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## Reflection and Questions



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