

Week 5: Instructional Strategies Assignment

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Three Instructional Strategies Which Are Evidence-Based Practices

Three instructional strategies which are evidence-based practices (EBPs) are Cognitive Behavior Intervention (CBI), Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT), and Peer-Mediated Instruction and Intervention (PMII).

Cognitive Behavior Intervention. CBI is an EBP which seeks to teach learners with ASD new cognitive processes (i.e. ways of thinking) which in turn can lead to changes in behavior (Mussey, and AFIRM Team, 2017). CBI has been found effective for improving foundational skills such as social skills, communication, and behavior, and also for improving emotional and mental health related skills (Mussey, and AFIRM Team, 2017). The steps to using CBI include setting a target goal, determining if the learner has prerequisite skills, identifying a measurable baseline, selecting or creating a CBI intervention, obtaining training for implementation, and implementing and measuring the results of the intervention. Because CBI involves helping a learner to recognize their own emotion and the impact on behaviors, younger children may not be good candidates for a CBI as the required thought processes and self-awareness may be beyond their capabilities (Karnezi and Tierney, 2022). Cognitive Behavior Drama (CBD), which involves learners in fictional dramatic experiences can lead to changes in thinking without requiring learners to “acknowledge their fears and anxieties or talk about them” and may be particularly effective with younger learners (Karnezi and Tierney, 2022).

Discrete Trial Teaching. DTT is an EBP used to teach a new response by repeated trials of exposure to some stimuli (Sam and AFIRM Team, 2016). DTT is an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) “instructional approach for teaching skills in a planned, controlled, and systematic manner, employing small, repeated steps with beginnings and endings” (Cardinal et al., 2017). DTT is a useful intervention for learners who have challenges acquiring certain new

skills due to lower functioning and reduced cognition. It most often is implemented in a one-to-one or one-to-two instructional setting.

Peer-Mediated Instruction and Intervention. Through PMII learners with ASD receive academic and social support from their peers in real time during class. This is important because for learners with ASD who receive most of their education in general education classes peers are more likely to be present at critical times than a special education teacher or paraprofessional. The learner with ASD may be more receptive to assistance from peers, as well. But peers who will offer PMII support must be trained and monitored, and must receive some intrinsic reward from offering the support. PMII “increases the frequency that learners with ASD will interact with peers without disabilities” (Sam and AFIRM Team, 2015).

Discussion

Each of the above-mentioned EBPs require clear and effective training so as to be implemented with fidelity. To implement CBI with fidelity will required both training in the necessary methods and procedures and training in locating or developing materials to use in implementing the intervention. There are several individuals and companies that provide ready-made materials for CBI, but creating materials which target CBI instruction for a particular learning environment or learner has advantages and is made easier by the large selection of video creation sites available online. I’ve noticed that the subject of my fieldwork observations is high-functioning but has interfering behaviors that keep him from reaching his potential. He frequently attempts to multitask by completing assignments online during direct instruction. He rarely participates in group discussions or answers questions posed by his teachers. The literature around CBI mostly describes this intervention as being used to reduce anxiety or fears held by the learner with ASD. In the case of my fieldwork learner, I sense that there may be some fear regarding frequent interaction with a teacher or peers during instruction, but also just a

desire to work alone and little cognitive understanding of the learning benefits of participating in class discussions. I hope that by changing this learner's thinking, I might also change his behavior. At present, most of his work done concurrently with instruction is done incorrectly and must be redone. There is an incentive for him to change his thinking.

Because DTT is implemented 1:1 or at most 1:2 it can be difficult for busy teachers to implement with fidelity to maximize effectiveness (Cardinal et al., 2017). Technology can provide a tool to improve training for special education teachers to improve fidelity. Fraser, et al. used computer simulation tools in which "The teacher's interaction with the environment changes the output, which provides intrinsic feedback to the teacher" (2019). Additionally, training paraprofessionals to implement DTT can help reduce the large demand on teacher time for implementation DTT. Cardinal et al. examined the effects of providing training for paraprofessionals to implement DTT through online video instruction and found such training both effective and efficient (Cardinal et al., 2017). I don't foresee using DTT with any of my current learners with ASD because my students are high-functioning older students and DTT is most effective with younger students or those lower-functioning older students.

I believe PMII holds the most promise for the learners with ASD I usually work with. To implement PMII with fidelity requires training for me and training for my peer mediator helpers, and it requires the development of appropriate training materials. Planning and supporting PMII is essential to make sure that both learners with ASD and peer mediators without disabilities benefit from the experience. PMII done well holds the added benefit of developing strong relationships among neurodiverse same-age peers. As our learners with ASD grow into adolescence and adulthood they will eventually leave special education behind. Having a supportive and knowledgeable body of same-age persons around them is a goal worth pursuing.

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