

Social/Communication Assessment: Screening for Skills That Promote Successful Inclusion

General education teachers revealed in a recent study that they believed their skills in managing students with ASD were strong, but the students were often unprepared to meet the demands of the classroom (Rosen, Rotheram-Fuller, & Mandell, 2011). What skills do students, including students with ASD, need to be successful in inclusive classrooms? These skills are not academic in nature but fall in the range of social, communication, and teacher-pleasing behaviors. Many of these skills are especially challenging for students with ASD. As such, it is important that these skills be assessed and taught. Table 2-2 provides a list of these skills with subskills that can be used as a screening measure for students in or entering inclusive settings (Myles, Aspy, & Grossman, in press). Items reflect research on teachers' perceptions of the behaviors required for successful inclusion (Kerr & Zigmond, 1986; Lane, Pierson, & Givner, 2003).

Table 2-1

Steps to Conducting a Reinforcer Preference Assessment for Students With ASD With Limited Verbal Skills

1. Start with a pool of items that may be reinforcing for the student. It is often easiest to observe the student to determine the sensory input she enjoys. For example if she seeks visual input, work with the OT to identify visually-based items that may serve as reinforcers. Identify 10 to 20 objects in this category.
2. Organize two containers: (a) one for items selected and (b) one for items not selected. If an object will not fit into a container, place a picture in the container.
3. While sitting with the student, show her two items and give the direction, "Pick one."
4. Provide adequate wait time for the student to select an item using her form of communication (e.g., visual orientation, reach, point, switch). Allow the student to interact with the item for a brief time period (i.e., 30 seconds using a visual/auditory timer to indicate start and end time).
5. Place items in the appropriate container (selected/not selected).
6. Continue the selection process until all items are presented to the student and placed in the proper container.
7. Place the container near the student's work area for reinforcement as appropriate.