



The TEACHER CENTER of Broome County
Teacher Study Group Grant Award
2003-2004

FINAL REPORT
DOCUMENT PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

STUDY GROUP TOPIC: Beyond Theory: Applying Best Practices in the Education of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

GROUP MEMBERS: Marjorie Brink, Christine Catarella, Melissa Shade, Earlene Avery, and Elinor Budrow

The final report must be word-processed and submitted both in print and on disk using this form. Include information under each of the following headings.

Describe the initial goal of the group noting any adjustments that had to be made as time passed.

The initial goal of the group was to read and discuss current research on the topic of autism in order to identify and embed effective educational practices into the Broome-Tioga BOCES' Structured Teaching program.

The group found that it was difficult to all read the same material as the time was short. We modified the process and each took on the responsibility to research and present one or two topics when we met.

This helped provide each of us with a general knowledge of 7 topics but only an in depth knowledge of one or two.

Describe the ACTION PLAN that the group followed.

The action plan is stated above. Each member of the group took a topic or two to research and present to the group on a specific date. The topics included:

Paraprofessional roles and duties within a classroom for children with autism - Earlene Avery

Communication/PECS, sign language, language development (AVB, ABLLS, developmental stages) – Elinor Budrow

Social Interactions / Social Stories, Comic Strip Cartooning, pairing, schedules and visual cues – Christine Catarella

Assessments, Reporting and Data tracking/ AVB, TEACCH and ELA Learning Standards – Melissa Shade

Overview of current Structured Teaching Program and research findings from National Research Council and others – Marjorie Brink

Describe how the action plan was implemented.

Each meeting was dedicated to a topic with time set aside for discussion on implications for to the current Structure Teaching classrooms. A final meeting was a compilation of materials, forms, and research into a notebook to be shared with all the staff in the program for children with autism (now called Oak Tree)

How has participating in this study group changed you as a teacher? Have any of your teaching practices changed?

There was recognition by the group that there were areas within the existing program that needed to be adjusted in order to reflect “best practice” and current research on effective strategies working with children with autism.

More recording and data keeping must be implemented

The report card must reflect more closely the New York State Learning Standards as well as student IEP goals

Language acquisition strategies should be co-taught both the teacher and speech therapist with more collaboration time planned within the day

Paraprofessionals need more ongoing and embedded training

We have all become aware of how the program we work in must be data driven in order to monitor student progress. We continue to work as a team in developing an extensive notebook to be shared to our colleagues.

What evidence is there that student achievement is improving as a result of participating in this study group? What kind of differences are you observing in your students?

This was a summer project and this will be monitored in the fall. What we do know, however, is we all will be able to follow our students' progress more thoroughly and be able to adjust instructional practice where needed with the additional knowledge we have gained through this summer's study group.

What evidence is there that the goals of the study group have/have not been met?

The notebook, a parent presentation of new "Oak Tree" Program, and future group members' presentations are some evidence of the study group meeting the goals stated.

Comment on the value of the study group process? Did it work for you?

As most the members of the study group worked this summer (some at more than one job), it was difficult to find times to meet. When we did, we seemed to increase our time together as we had more and more to discuss. The study group was a great process but the time-line was too short. A longer time (even a couple of weeks) would have helped us to synthesis and

analysis the information more thoroughly.

How can we make the study group program better?

Summer Study group – time