Description of methods of teaching students with ASD

**Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)** (From “Applied Behavior Analysis: Its Application in the Treatment of Autism and Related Disorders in Young Children” by Sandra L. Harris and Lara Delmolino which is included in the resources folder.)

- **Definition** - ABA uses the theory of behaviorism to modify human behavior as part of a learning or treatment process. It assesses the relationship between targeted behavior and environment, then works to change behavior. The principles of the analysis are applied systematically to IMPROVE socially significant behavior then identify variables responsible for that behavior.
- Early, intensive treatment using ABA enables a significant number of children to enter mainstream education and achieve normal intellectual functioning.

**ABA in the classroom:**

**DTI - discreet trial instruction**

- **Goal** - to present information to child in a clear, concise, and consistent way in a structured format. The structure allows the student to isolate and learn the key components
- **Components:** the behavior of interest, the antecedent (what comes before behavior), and consequence (what comes after the behavior). Stimulus- response- consequence model.
- **Example** - teacher (stimulus): “Throw me the ball”
  Student(response): [throws ball]
  Teacher (consequence): “Great throw!” (reinforce or punish)

**Mand Training**

- **Mand** is a behavior that specifies its reinforcer (request, demand, command).
- **Example** - asking for a glass of water or pointing to a water fountain is a Mand that specifies obtaining water as its reinforcer.
- **Goal:** to increase frequency and range of Mands. Provides reinforcement for communicative behavior.

**Natural Environment Training**

- **Refer** to structure and context within which verbal language instruction takes place.
- **Stimulus** items chosen by the child are varied frequently and are functionally relevant.
- **This method** takes advantage of a child's interests and momentary motivation.
- **The teaching exchanges** are not forced, but occur within natural interactions.

**Behavioral Fluency**

- "The combination of accuracy plus speed that enables competent individuals to function efficiently and effectively in their natural environments." -Binder
- A skill is mastered if it can be done accurately, automatically, and in many different situations.
- The goals are retention, endurance, and application with the hope of long term gains.
Social Stories (From “What’s the Story?” by Tiffany L. Hutchins included in the resources folder)

- Stories are used to bolster the student's social understanding of proper behavior.
- The goal is communication enhancement and teaching appropriate behavior.
- The purpose is to share meaningful and accurate information in a supportive, safe, and positive way.
- The stories can be used to remediate attention seeking and task avoidance behavior.
- Example of ‘Excellent voice’ social story used in “What's the Story?” Article.

Picture Exchange Communication System (from textbook, p. 251)

- Symbols and pictures are used to supplement or support communication development.
- Allows students with ASD with limited or no speech to initiate requests and describe observations through pictures.
- Phase I: exchanging single picture for desired activity or item.
  Phase II: using single picture in new places or with new people.
  Phase III: discriminating among pictures
  Phase IV: constructing simple sentences pairing pictures.
  Phase V: learning to use pictures in response to 'what do you want' questions.
  Phase VI: using pictures to comment on environment with sentence starters such as 'I see, hear, feel' etc.
- Common to only reach stage III or IV. (p. 251)

Theatre Therapy for children with ASD (From “Brief Report: Theatre as Therapy for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder” by Blythe A. Corbett, Jennifer Price, and Clayton W. Schupp included in the resources folder)

- Social Emotional Neuroscience Endocrinology (SENSE) theatre.
- Designed to improve socioemotional functioning and reduce stress in children with ASD.
- Pairs students with ASD with typically developing peers who serve as expert models.
- Utilizes well established behavioral intervention paradigms implemented with theatrical techniques.
- Peer models work with students with ASD to acquire broader skills and individualized target behaviors.
- Peers also performed their partners role on video which allowed SENSE participants to watch, imitate, and practice at home as a form of video modeling.
- It provided a supportive social environment and individualized assistance.
- Peers modeled appropriate social behavior, shaping techniques, external reinforcement (stickers), and intrinsic reinforcers (praise).

Results of SENSE Theatre
• Children with ASD showed modest improvement in face identification and theory of mind skills.
• Showed some improvement in social perception of children with ASD.
• The video modeling and reciprocal social interaction through role playing served to facilitate social awareness and perspective taking.
• SENSE theatre also increased empathy, social referencing, and communication skills in the expert model peers working with the children with ASD.
• The opportunity to dynamically engage with others in a skilled, supportive, and reciprocal environment is a key contributory element of the program.