Zack Cartmel

SPED 860

M2 Major Assignment: Augmentative/Alternative Communication Program Planning

Nevah Kelley is a 6-year-old 1st grade student diagnosed with ASD and meeting autism

eligibility under IDEA. Nevah is currently placed in a self-contained classroom with three other students with autism and receives instruction from her teacher and a teacher’s aide. Her achievement testing shows that she is not far behind same aged peers in most academic areas. Her teacher and parents report that she enjoys being at school, likes to help out in the classroom, and likes to play with different toys like Lego, Care Bears, and the iPad. She avoids interacting with peers and struggles to interact appropriately. Nevah has a few vocalizations but they cannot be understood by her parents or school staff. She is considered nonverbal and uses an AAC device to communicate (Touch Chat on an iPad). The teacher reports that she does not reliably use her device and becomes easily frustrated when attempting to use it. More often, Nevah either leads school staff to what she needs or becomes upset when her needs are not being met. Since Nevah already is familiar with Touch Chat our goal is to increase Nevah’s use of Touch Chat and establish it as her primary means for communication.

 Target behavior: With or without preferred items present, Nevah will approach a listener (teacher, aide, other school staff, or peer) and use Touch Chat to request for preferred items using a phrase of one word or more without prompting from staff.

Visual example of Touch Chat on an iPad:

In order to determine preferred items, we conducted a reinforcer sampling by first asking Nevah’s parents and teachers what she likes to eat and what she likes to play with. We narrowed our selection down to Lego, a Care Bear plush toy, Skittles, Gummy Bears, and M&Ms. We determined which of these was most preferred by placing all five items on a tray and allowing Nevah to select it off the tray. We replaced the items and allowed Nevah to select again. Once Nevah selected an item three times we removed it from the tray and concluded it was highly preferred. We determined that her most preferred items ranked as follows: Skittles, Lego, Gummy Bears, M&Ms, and the Care Bear plush toy. From this, we decided to first teach Nevah to request for Skittles using Touch Chat.

Training will take place in the self-contained classroom. The teacher and teacher aide will both take part in teaching Nevah. Teaching can take place at the table or on the floor. Nevah will have her iPad with Touch Chat. The aide will sit across from Nevah holding the Skittles while the teacher sits behind Nevah to assist with any prompting. Prompting will be done following a most to least hierarchy (full physical, partial physical, gestural) with the teacher fading prompts as quickly as possible. This same system of prompting will be used for all phases of the training. Nevah’s request will be reinforced with access to the item she requests.

Teaching will occur in 5 phases (since we are only requiring a 1-word request for now). In phase 1, we will work on teaching Nevah to select the picture of the Skittles using Touch Chat. In this phase, the only button available on the Touch Chat is the button for Skittles. Once Nevah is selecting the Skittles button to request for Skittles for 9 out of 10 opportunities we can move on to phase 2. In phase 2, the set up is similar but now we are teaching Nevah to travel to a communication partner. Once Nevah is traveling to a communication partner independently for 9 out of 10 opportunities we can move on to phase 3. In phase 3, an additional button is added to teach Nevah to discriminate between the different buttons on the Touch Chat screen. Once Nevah is discriminating correctly for 9 out of 10 trials we began training additional preferred items for Nevah to request. Once Nevah could discriminate 12 preferred items and could discriminate between 3 buttons presented as options we move on to phase 4. In phase 4, Nevah is taught to respond to “What do you want?” by using her Touch Chat to communicate what item she wants. Once she has responded correctly for 9 out of 10 trials we can consider this phase complete and move on to phase 5. In phase 5, we would monitor Nevah’s ability to spontaneously request for items rather than being prompted by a question or being able to see the item. When Nevah is spontaneously requesting for 9 out of 10 opportunities we would consider this phase mastered. If we were training for a full sentence structure, we would teach that in a phase before phase 4. We would teach Nevah to select the “I want” button on her Touch Chat and once she responds correctly for 9 out of 10 trials we would move on to what would then be phase 5 teaching her to respond to “What do you want?”.

In order to monitor progress, we will use a data sheet to mark a + or – for correct or incorrect responding to each opportunity presented. As stated above, when Nevah is able to correctly approach a listener (teacher, aide, other school staff, or peer) and use Touch Chat to request for preferred items using a phrase of one word or more without prompting from staff for 9 out of 10 trials she will reach mastery criteria for that phase.

References

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