Essential Principles of Effective Programs for Children with Autism

Good education is good education. Good programming for children with autism is not essentially different from education for other children. Educators who seek to understand various children’s learning styles and teach to those styles are most successful.

1. Tailor curriculum specifically to the needs of the individual child and ensure tasks required of the child are meaningful to him or her. Curricular adaptations and modifications are developed to allow the child to participate in a wide variety of activities, if only to a partial extent.
   a. All activities are life centered.
   b. All activities and materials are age appropriate.

2. Put in place a comprehensive positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS) plan with the following characteristics:
   a. The environment is analyzed to determine its affect on the child’s behavior.
   b. Behavior is analyzed to determine its communicative functions.
   c. The environment is enriched and modified, with changes made to the teaching methods, curriculum, and teaching staff, to avert potential behavior problems.
   d. Children are provided a means to understand their environment with expectations and consequences clearly understandable; staff is trained to use the chosen system routinely.
   e. Children are provided an effective means to communicate with others, and staff is trained to routinely use the system to communicate with him or her.
   f. Data are systematically collected, and sound behavior management principles are consistently applied.
   g. Staff shares strategies with parents and provides opportunities for parents to observe and practice the strategies used at school.

3. Children are provided with opportunities and means to interact socially. Meaningful integration with nondisabled peers is maximized. The amount and nature of integration depends on the individual child and is determined by the individualized education program support team.

4. Children are provided with ways to have their sensory needs met.

5. A transdisciplinary approach to education is used with therapies integrated into the total program. Every person interacting with the child is a member of his or her support team.

6. Parental involvement is an integral part of the program.