Scenarios for Collaboration:
How Changing the Environment Affects Behavior

Austin’s Scenario

Austin is a first grade boy who has been diagnosed with autism. He functions as mildly mentally retarded. Austin responds to a few basic signs (eat, drink, sit, want, quiet, done, home), and he will sometimes spontaneously make these signs himself. He makes sounds that are not recognizable as words. Austin is usually fairly passive unless he gets upset. Noises seem to upset him.

His classroom is across from the gym, and his teacher likes to keep the door open and the windows closed. The windows face a quiet wooded area. While the room has a lot of natural light from the windows, the teacher often keeps the blinds closed and uses the fluorescent lighting. Austin sometimes stims on the reflections from this light onto the shiny surfaces in the classroom. The classroom is often stuffy from the closed windows, is noisy from the gym, and is smelly from the nearby cafeteria. In the classroom, the desks are in straight lines, and materials are wherever the teacher can most easily reach them.

Austin often falls asleep after lunch, which makes his teacher angry. He only wants to work when he can have an adult assisting him one-on-one. When upset, he will jump up and down and squeal loudly and, occasionally, will bite his own arm. He gets upset when there is an unexpected change, when he is hungry, when he thinks it is time to go home, and when there is a lot of noise and confusion. This also happens when the bells ring for class to start or end. The classroom teacher is very artistic and has the room decorated from wall to wall with her creations. Austin will sometimes stare for long periods at pictures and decorations when he is supposed to be working. Austin does not like to be touched. When he misbehaves, the teacher’s first response is to restrain him.

Austin will sit and look at books for long periods, and he likes to listen and hum along to music. He can match pictures and letter or number symbols, same to same. Austin gets frustrated with assignments that require a great deal of eye-hand coordination.

Carol’s Scenario

Carol is 13-years-old and is in middle school. She has a diagnosis of autism and tests with average intelligence. She can read well, but there are often questions about her comprehension, especially when there are abstract concepts or when higher-level thinking is required. Carol is a whiz at math calculations, but struggles when she has to apply or to problem solve these skills.

While Carol is fully included, her teachers are concerned because she does not take care of her appearance and she dresses in ways that make her look odd. Carol often speaks out in class at inappropriate times. She often gets stressed because she gets confused about her schedule and assignments. While she means to keep up with her work, she often forgets or loses papers.

Carol’s parents are very protective and have kept her at home a great deal, so she has not learned many community living skills that she will need for independence. Students make fun of her, and she does not have many friends. Carol’s teachers are concerned about transition to the high school.
Carol seems spatially confused. She gets lost in the school and cannot find things in her classrooms or locker. Her desk and locker are a mess causing ridicule from other students. When teachers or students have shiny jewelry on, she often stares at it for extended lengths of time and wants to touch it. Carol will be wearing heavy sweaters when others in the room are hot. She may be dripping with sweat but doesn’t seem to think to take off her sweater. She says that she works best at home with music on because then she isn’t distracted by other sounds. Carol is fairly alert in the morning, but by late afternoon seems tired and not with the class. Carol does her best work by herself when given explicit instructions. She needs to learn to work with others.
Proactive Child Support Plan Activity for Environment

Team Members

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Student _____________________ Date __________________

Behaviors:

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Determine “set-up” situations or states affecting the behavior:

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Plan for environmental changes that will affect behavior: