Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children (TEACCH)

Brief Introduction
The TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children) approach utilizes the relative strengths of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Schopler et al., 1995) and is appropriate for individuals of all ages and developmental levels. TEACCH uses the principles of structured teaching to support individuals with ASD in understanding their world better and enables them to be more independent and productive.

Description
The Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children (TEACCH) program is a comprehensive structured teaching approach designed for individuals with autism and communication disabilities and their families. The TEACCH program was developed by Eric Schopler in the late 1970s and is administered through the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The TEACCH method provides students with developmentally appropriate structure and organization in the learning environment, which moderates challenges students with ASD may encounter.

The principles of TEACCH’s structured teaching include:
- Understanding the culture of autism
- Developing an individual- and family-centered plan for each student, rather than using a standard curriculum
- Structuring the physical environment in a way that will assist students with autism to understand meaning
- Using visual supports to make the sequence of daily activities predictable and understandable
- Using visual supports to make individual tasks understandable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Skills/Intervention Goals</th>
<th>Settings</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3–16 years</td>
<td>Social, communication, behavior, social-cognitive, interpersonal, emotional regulation, adaptive</td>
<td>Home, school, community</td>
<td>Components that make up this curriculum have support as EBP from evidence of NPCD and NAC.</td>
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</tbody>
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Research


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**Resources and Materials**

Structured teaching training is available through Division TEACCH (www.teacch.com).
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Steps for Implementation

**Step 1. Identifying the Intervention Goals**

A. Refer to learner’s IEP/IFSP to identify potential intervention targets.

B. Discuss goals with team members, including family and learner.

**Step 2. Defining the Target Behavior or Skill**

A. Clearly define the target behavior or skill so that it is observable and measurable.

**Step 3. Collecting Baseline Data**

A. Determine the type of data needed to assess the target skill.

B. Collect data on at least three occasions over three to five days to determine the learner’s skills prior to intervention.

**Step 4. Implementing the Intervention**

The principle of modifying the environment to accommodate the needs of students with autism is the foundation for structured teaching (Schopler, Mesibov, & Hearsey, 1995). Four main components are connected to this process:

A. **Physical organization.** Physical organization refers to the physical layout of the classroom or the area for teaching. Physical organization helps or hinders a student’s independent functioning and his or her recognition of and compliance with rules and limits. It is designed to provide students with visual information to direct their activities in a predictable manner.

B. **Scheduling.** Students with autism often have problems with sequential memory and organization of time; therefore, schedules are used to facilitate learning. Visual schedules let the students know what activities will take place and in what sequence (Schopler et al., 1995) and assist them in predicting events, lessening their anxiety.

C. **Work systems.** Work systems tell students what activities must be completed in independent work areas by visually specifying what and how much work must be done and indicating when each task and the work session are complete (Schopler et al., 1995).

D. **Task organization.** Similar to work systems, task organization determines what work students do independently, what needs to be done within a task, how many items must be completed, and final outcomes (Schopler et al., 1995).
Step 5. Monitoring Learner Progress

A. Collect data to measure the effectiveness of the intervention on the target behaviors or skills for a minimum of two weeks.

B. Ask others who work or live with the learner to collect data on the target behaviors across settings.

Step 6. Reviewing Data and Modifying the Plan if Necessary

A. Depending on intervention findings, continue or adapt the target behaviors or instructional techniques.

B. When procedures are altered, change only one variable at a time.

C. Collect and review data following each adaptation or change.

Step 7. Addressing Generalization and Maintenance of Learned Behavior or Skill

A. Promote generalization of the target skill by including self- or peer awareness using multiple peers and/or adults.