UNDERSTANDING READING AND AUTISM IN THE PRIMARY GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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Literacy skill is one critical building component that is taught in the primary grades for ensuing literacy development. For children identified with disabilities and are recipients of special education services tend to spend more time in general education classrooms specially those diagnosed with Autism spectrum Disorder in an inclusive setting.

As suggested by the No Child Left behind Act (2002) for which suggests that teachers and educators are to give scientifically based reading instructions for each and every one student including those individuals with other disabilities like Autism (ASD). However, one of the challenges being faced by general education teachers is on how they can provide effective reading instructions to students with ASD. For educators know that one of the challenges they have to overcome is the difficulty of learners with ASD to comprehend text which is one essential building block in literacy instructions. With this problem, according to American Psychiatric Association 2013, the learner may even have difficulty achieving the expectation of comprehending text at the fundamental level.

Some of cognitive factors that append to the reading comprehension shortfall of children with Autism include language processing, communicative output, repetitive behavior, though there are identified factors which describe the variations in the comprehension level of children with ASD. Three of which are Theory of the Mind which states the capacity to understand others’ point of view without ToM, learners with ASD find struggle in considering the idea that other people have own thoughts.
that their own, Central Coherence on the other hand refers to the capacity to convey the idea or concept collectively for which children with ASD exhibit weak central coherence that is the failure to bring the central concept or context, and Executive Functioning which is the process of scrutinizing, monitoring, categorizing and planning development when presented with a situation. This assumption will further help us be aware of why children with ASD find difficulty with reading comprehension as they reach the age of eight years old.

Because comprehending is a concealed activity with which the process takes place inside the mind of the reader, therefore, it is imperative for teachers to discover and purposely use strategies that will make them able to scrutinize, the level of understanding student have regarding the passage or the topic.

There are suggested strategies that are helpful in effectively improve their reading comprehension which are as follows, Access And Putting Together Prior Knowledge (presenting information related to the text, teaching key terms), Construct Mental Imagery (using pictures in previewing a story), Make Connections (using a visual presentation of the story similar to graphic organizers), Engage In Consistent Dialogue or Discussions (constructing questions and answers based on the story), and recapitulate/Summarize Understanding (creating causal connections and causal chains through story recall).

Since the law commands that every child is entitled to be given quality daily academic reading instructions as stated in Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Being known the characteristics of children with ASD, it will be helpful for teachers having difficulty teaching reading comprehension to students with ASD to utilize evidence-based strategies. A primary classroom teacher must be fully conscious and aware of the uniqueness in cognitive method/style of students with ASD by giving them easy-to-
use steps comprehend reading text to be done on a regular basis, we can open doors for children with ASD to attain reading comprehension skills at their utmost potential.

References:

(http://www.readingrockets.org/reading-comprehension-and-autism-primary-general-education-classroom)