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Issue 25

PCI: Reading Program for Students with Developmental Disabilities & Significant Learning Differences

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In reviewing the research on teaching reading to students with developmental disabilities and significant learning differences, Haugen-McLane, Hohlt and Haney (2007) identified a need for a contemporary sight-word based reading program that built a base of high-frequency words for students and then used these words to teach basic phonemic patterns and decoding strategies. This led to the creation of the *PCI Reading Program*, a comprehensive leveled program for nonreaders of all ages. The *PCI Reading Program* is designed as a three-level system that helps non-readers learn to read step-by-step.

Like other effective sight-word based programs, the *PCI Reading Program* begins with errorless discrimination and mastery-based learning of a list of words. In Level One, 140 words are taught. Some of the features which appeal to its users are the amount of repetition and reviews as well as the multi-sensory approach used in the different steps of the program. Since the PCI books feature life-skills based themes and the illustrations are geared to please individuals of all ages, readers are engaged regardless of their age. In addition, as the program includes scripted, easy to follow lesson plans and incorporates an evaluation of student progress into each of the in the cycles, it is easily implemented.

Some of the research-based techniques embedded in the *PCI Reading Program* include: *Fernald Tracing Method* where students trace the target word five times, reading the word during and after the tracing. Tracing a word has long been viewed as an effective way for it to be encoded in short-term and long-term memory (Sundbye & Mc Coy, 2001).

The program also includes the use of manipulatives in order to make learning more concrete. Specifically, the PCI kit allows learners to create sentences using words and picture cards on a plastic card tray, a Match on the Mat activity in which students demonstrate comprehension of the most recently learned words by matching phrases and sentences to pictures, and a Word Game to solidify knowledge and comprehension.

The PCI Reading program has 5 steps. Step 1 includes learning the new word, tracing the word, hands-on practice and independent practice. Step 2 includes repeating the activities in step 1 in order to learn 4 more words. Step 3 includes reviewing words with the interactive word game. Step 4 is a posttest. Finally, step 5 includes reading a vocabulary-controlled book. In addition to these steps, the program contains a *Building Reading Skills Binder* which focuses on five of the most basic pre-reading skills: visual attention, attention, memory, concepts of print, phonemic awareness.

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Communication Corner:

Facilitating Reading Comprehension

As a Speech-Language Pathologist, I often encounter students who have learned how to decode words in a text but fail to comprehend what they have read. This scenario frequently occurs with students on the autism spectrum. Many of these students display an ability to read words above their grade level yet lag behind in their ability to understand what they have read. This difficulty stems from general receptive language limitations rather than from a limitation specific to reading comprehension.

Hyperlexia is a term that is used to describe the superior reading abilities of students with ASD who have significant difficulties understanding and using language to communicate. It is not surprising that some individuals with autism have learned to read and spell but cannot speak. The presence of speech should not be a prerequisite to literacy for our students with Autism.

Teachers, paraprofessionals and parents are often seeking assistance in helping students with autism improve their literacy skills. The following websites have very informative, easy to read articles about developing literacy skills.

<http://www.paulakluth.com/readings/>

This website was developed by Dr. Paula Kluth who is a consultant in inclusive education. She has a section on her website specific to literacy. Some of the articles available on her website are: *20 Ways to Adapt the Read Aloud, Inclusive Literacy Learning and Supporting the Literacy Learning of Students with Autism*.

<http://readerswithautism.com/>

This website is an excellent resource for developing reading comprehension skills. One of the creators of the website, Sara Finegan has written two excellent articles: *Autism and hyperlexia, part 1: Anaphoric cuing?* and *Autism and hyperlexia, part 2: Helping Bobby read* that provide detailed information on using the strategy of Anaphoric Cuing. This strategy has been shown to improve the reading comprehension of students with autism.

Helene Packman, SLP

PCI: Reading Program for Students with Developmental Disabilities & Significant Learning Differences (Cont.)

Student Prerequisites

To begin Level One of the Program, students need to be able to follow simple, one-sentence directions and demonstrate their understanding of a teacher's request by either pointing or responding verbally. Students must also be able to see words on a page and somehow point to or otherwise indicate recognition of those words. They need to be able to communicate a response to a question or directive. Students do not need to know the alphabet, although they must be able to visually discriminate between words and letters. For students who need additional practice in visual discrimination before beginning the program, teachers should use the lesson plans in Unit One of the *Building Reading Skills binder*.

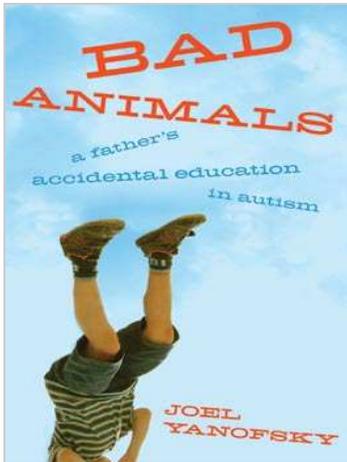
Several of our elementary and high schools are using the PCI Reading Program with students with special needs and have observed an increase in student motivation and success in reading. If you would like more information about this reading program, please speak to your Consultant for Special Needs or visit the company's website at: <http://www.pcieducation.com/reading>

Jovette Francoeur, Consultant for Special Needs

References: PCI Education (2009), *PCI Reading Program, A Scientifically Research-Based Approach for Nonreaders of all ages*. San Antonio, TX: PCI educational Publishing.

Haugen-McLane, J., Holt, J., & Haney, J. (2007). *PCI Reading Program*. San Antonio, TX: PCI Educational Publishing.

Sundbye, N. & McCoy, L. (2001) *Helping the struggling reader: what to teach and how to teach it* (2nd ed). San Antonio, TX: PCI Educational Publishing.



Read All About It!



Bad Animals: A Father's Accidental Education in Autism,
by Joel Yanofsky (2011)

Joel Yanofsky is a Montreal writer and parent of a child with autism. His book, *A Father's Accidental Education in Autism*, is a detailed memoir of his experience of raising a son with an ASD. Yanofsky gives a poignant account of his personal struggles in coming to terms with his child's diagnosis and of the day to day challenges that he and his wife faced with their son Jonah. His book is written with humour and honesty, and may be of interest to parents who face similar challenges.

Behaviour Tip:

Skill Deficit vs. Motivation Deficit

Now that the school year is well under way, there have been many opportunities to get to know your students with ASD and their learning styles. One of the behaviours we frequently encounter in the classroom is the student refusing to complete work that they have been asked to do. The degree of non-compliance in this situation can be quite high so it would be important to know why it is occurring. In many cases, the child's refusal is due to either a *skill deficit* or a *motivational deficit*. Learning to tell the difference between the two can save us much time and frustration.

A *skill deficit* presents itself when a student is unable to complete a task or worksheet because the content is essentially above their level of learning and knowledge. In other words, the student refuses to do the work because the work is too difficult for them. In this case, the task would need to be adapted or modified to a level which will allow the student to feel confident enough to complete it. It is important to remember that any adaptation or modification of curriculum must be mentioned in the student's IEP.

A *motivational deficit*, on the other hand, presents itself when a student has the ability to complete a task, but lacks the desire or is not engaged enough in the task to do it. In other words, they simply do not feel like doing it and do not have enough incentive to comply. In this situation, the use of positive reinforcement, such as rewards, work well to motivate the student to move along. Try using a token economy system, an "I am working for" card, or a choice board in order to visually communicate to the student what rewards they will get for finishing the task.



CONSIDERING HER STUDENTS WITHOUT
DISABILITIES, MRS. BAKER
REALIZES DAVID'S UNUSUAL
BEHAVIORS AREN'T THAT UNUSUAL.

