CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

Tomeika

Tomeika is a three-year-old girl. She was recently diagnosed with autistic disorder. Tomeika is able to make many vocalizations and is able to say one recognizable word. Tomeika will say “juice”, which she pronounces as “oos.” Throughout the day, Tomeika cries and falls to the floor to gain access to food, obtain a favorite toy, or when she wants to be picked up. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Williams, would like for Tomeika to communicate her desires with words, but do not know how to help her. Tomeika recently began attending an early childhood special education classroom for learners with ASD in the Hampton County Public School System for six hours a day, four days a week. On Wednesdays, Tomeika and her peers do not go to school. Instead, on this day, Tomeika’s interventionist, Mrs. Dell, has parent conferences in her students’ homes. During the conferences, Mrs. Dell discusses educational programming, learner progress, areas of concern, and also provides training to parents.

Step 1. Determine the Needs of the Family

During the first few weeks of intervention, Mrs. Dell has learned a great deal about Tomeika and her strengths, learning style, and specific needs. As Mrs. Dell prepares for her first parent conference, she decides she would like to learn more about the needs of Tomeika’s family. Mrs. Dell understands that needs in the home may differ from those in other environments, so wants to take the time to get to know about Tomeika’s home situation before providing input and training to her parents. During the first conference, Mrs. Dell discusses Tomeika’s intervention program and progress she has made during the first few weeks of intervention. Next, the three adults discuss home concerns. Mrs. Dell wants to ensure she has an accurate and thorough understanding of the parents’ concerns and priorities, so she uses a family information form (see Resources section) to interview the parents. While completing the interview, Mrs. Dell focuses on gathering information regarding Tomeika’s strengths, parent-child interaction patterns, and primary areas of concern. Additionally, Mrs. Dell gathers information regarding typical family activities and daily routines. Once the interview is completed, Mrs. Dell observes Tomeika for approximately one hour. She observes Tomeika eating lunch, playing independently, and playing with her father on the swing set.

Step 2. Selecting Goals

During the second conference, Mrs. Dell works with Mr. and Mrs. Williams to create appropriate home goals for Tomeika. The three adults review the concerns raised at the previous conference. They prioritize the goals and identify those that will have the greatest impact on family functioning. Mr. and Mrs. Williams are most concerned about Tomeika’s ability to communicate her wants and needs consistently in the home. Second, they would like to see her reduce the occurrence of interfering behavior, including screaming, crying, and falling to the floor. Once goals are identified, they write the goals in observable and measurable terms so everyone has a clear understanding and can monitor the target skill accurately. The following goals are developed by the team.
CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

Tomeika will verbally request (one word) at least five desired items or activities at home each day for five of seven days for two months.

Tomeika will verbally request desired items (one word) instead of exhibiting interfering behavior (crying, screaming, dropping to floor) and will demonstrate no more than three occurrences of interfering behavior per week for two months.

Through discussion and observation, it was determined that Tomeika would benefit the most from learning to request the following:

- up (for being picked up),
- chip,
- cookie,
- movie, and
- swing.

Additionally, Tomeika’s parents said that they would like to increase the number and type of interactions they have with her. The following goals were developed by the team.

To increase number and type of interactions with Tomeika, Mr. and Mrs. Williams will:
1. model language throughout the day by labeling objects and actions at least five times each day for two months,
2. read bed time stories to Tomeika three times each week for two months,
3. play concept development games during bath time three times each week for two months, and
4. provide Tomeika with the opportunity to request a desired item a minimum of five times a day for two months.

**Step 3. Developing the Intervention Plan**

Using information derived from the interview, observation, and ongoing discussions, Mrs. Dell creates an intervention plan for Mr. and Mrs. Williams. She is particularly thoughtful about this step because Mr. and Mrs. Williams both work and have another child. Mrs. Dell outlines a plan that provides a description of when and where to provide instruction. Additionally, she provides step-by-step instructions on how intervention is to be implemented.

Mrs. Dell believes the intervention should take place within the context of Tomeika’s natural routines. Tomeika will encounter most of her target items on a regular basis allowing her parents to take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities. Further, it will be easy for her parents to create additional requesting opportunities throughout her day. Since the items are all motivational for Tomeika, Mr. and Mrs. Williams believe it will be feasible to offer the target items at least 10 times per day within her daily routine.

Mrs. Dell decides that naturalistic intervention will be an appropriate instructional strategy to teach the parents. Naturalistic intervention has been demonstrated to be an
CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

effective instructional strategy and parents of children with ASD have used this strategy to successfully teach requesting. Additionally, naturalistic intervention is designed to be conducted within natural routines.

Next, Mrs. Dell creates a data collection system that is succinct and easy to implement in the context of the home. She decides to have Mr. and Mrs. Williams keep frequency data for both the requesting of desired items as well as the occurrence of interfering behaviors. Mrs. Dell carefully crafts a data sheet for requesting. She lists the five target items (up, chip, cookie, movie, and swing) and provides a column to make a tally mark each time Tomeika verbally requests the item during the course of the day. Next, she creates a data sheet for interfering behavior. This data sheet is similar to the requesting data sheet making it easy to implement. On this sheet, Mrs. Dell lists the problem behavior and provides a column to make a tally mark each time Tomeika demonstrates the behavior during the day.

Step 4. Training Parents

Now that the intervention plan has been created, Mrs. Dell is ready to begin training Mr. and Mrs. Williams. The three adults work together to develop an individualized training program that will result in parent learning and implementation of the intervention. When creating the training program, the team first considers the training format and location. They decide the Williams should receive individualized training in their home since that is where the intervention will be implemented. Second, they consider the amount and duration of training. The team outlines a training schedule that offers two hours of training each week for four consecutive weeks. Once the four weeks are completed, the team will evaluate progress and outline further training as needed. Lastly, the team considers training components. Mrs. Dell provides a tremendous amount of input regarding how best to train Mr. and Mrs. Williams. She wants to be sure the training components are appropriate for this specific intervention plan and also address the Williams’ learning style. Mrs. Dell decides to provide approximately 30 minutes of training in a conversational format to supply the parents with foundational information on the intervention strategy and data collection system. All other training was conducted using a hands-on approach with Tomeika present. This training consists of Mrs. Dell modeling the intervention, then providing opportunities for both Mr. and Mrs. Williams to practice. Mrs. Dell provides coaching to the parents and gives immediate feedback regarding tasks they performed correctly as well as areas needing improvement. At the end of each training session, the three adults spend approximately 10 minutes recapping the day’s training and identifying the training needs for the upcoming week.

Step 5. Implementing the Intervention

As the training sessions are provided, Mr. and Mrs. Williams diligently implement the interventions throughout the week. They take advantage of natural opportunities when Tomeika desires one of the target items and are able to provide many additional opportunities for her to request each day. They begin modeling language by labeling a
CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

wide array of objects and actions Tomeika encounters. They add pleasant bath time and story time routines. Over time, they begin to feel more comfortable with implementing the interventions and are able to incorporate the goals seamlessly into their typical daily routines. As they implement the intervention, they are careful to complete the data sheets and note major successes with Tomeika as well as concerns and questions.

Step 6. Progress Monitoring

Mrs. Dell wants to be sure Tomeika’s parents are implementing the intervention with fidelity. Approximately once a week, Mrs. Dell uses the “Parent Intervention: Fidelity of Implementation Form” (see documents resource section) to evaluate and document their progress. Each time, she scores the checklist, reviews the results with Mr. and Mrs. Williams, provides positive comments, and makes suggestions for areas of improvement. During each training session, Mr. and Mrs. Williams show Mrs. Dell the data they have collected and notes. The team analyzes the data to ensure Tomeika is progressing. Further, Mrs. Dell provides answers to their questions. After the four week training period, Mr. and Mrs. Williams feel confident about their ability to implement the intervention with Tomeika. The team agrees that training on naturalistic intervention can be reduced to once a month. During the monthly training sessions, the parents and team members review data and discuss progress and next steps.

Mrs. Dell wants to help the parents generalize this strategy and intervention plan to other behaviors. Therefore, during the monthly training sessions, she discusses additional needs and concerns, outlines new goals, and provides additional training to help them implement the intervention effectively. Additionally, Mrs. Dell has made it clear that Mr. and Mrs. Williams can e-mail her anytime with immediate questions.

After eight weeks of implementing the intervention in the home, Tomeika is now consistently verbally requesting “up,” “swing,” and “cookie,” which she pronounces as “oo-kee”. She will sometimes request “chip,” but often requires her parents to provide a verbal prompt. During this time, her parents have seen a significant decrease in the occurrence of interfering behavior, as she now demonstrates this behavior on average less than two times per week. Her parents are thrilled with her progress. Because Tomeika has shown progress on making verbal requests, the team has identified two additional items to target—ball and bath. Her parents are eager to begin work on these new items.