Introduction

Students at the higher end of the autism spectrum—with diagnoses many refer to as high functioning autism, pervasive developmental disorder, or Asperger’s Syndrome are often included in regular education classes, and especially during times of social interactions with regular education peers.

Characteristics of these students may include difficulty with “Theory of Mind” (i.e., difficulty understanding the perspective of others, or egocentric perspective taking,) delays in the development of age appropriate communications skills, and other social skill difficulties.

As teachers and student support personnel, we write IEP goals to address these students’ social and communications needs. We provide direct instruction in social and communication skills. We are required to determine the degree of progress toward their goals on a regular basis. Authentic assessment tasks can guide us in determining how well students have developed the target behaviors in real-life situations. Assessing progress through rubrics allows us to determine the specific criteria involved in a student’s progress toward a particular IEP goal, and the levels of performance allows us to determine the degree of progress toward that goal in an objective manner.

Using rubrics for each of the IEP goals we have for our students will provide a clearer understanding of that student’s progress for parents, teachers, and for ourselves rather than just checking off “making progress” on a student’s report card. Rubrics allow us to access where a student is functioning for each criterion that makes up each individual IEP goal. Given that the progress of these students is often uneven, rubrics allow all involved with the child’s education to know his or her stronger and weaker areas as we teach them skills defined by their IEP.

Video modeling and video self modeling are techniques that involve demonstrating target behaviors through video representation of the behavior. I have included several tasks that are assessed by “scoring” a video of a student performing a task. An additional advantage of videotaping the student in real life situations is that the video can also be used as a teaching tool for that student. Having students watch themselves exhibiting an appropriate behavior on the video (with the video edited to only show instances of the appropriate behavior) is an evidence-based intervention that has been found to support the teaching of these specific skills to a student.