Using Total Task Chaining to Teach Functional Life Skills

What is the level of evidence?

- This is a Research-Based Practice for students with disabilities based on four methodologically sound single subject studies across 16 participants with disabilities.

Where is the best place to find out how to do this practice?

- Using total task chaining to teach laundry skills
  Laundromat (McDonnell & McFarland, 1988)

- Using total task chaining to teach bowling skills
  Bowling and Pinball (Vandercook, 1991)

With who was it implemented?

- Students with
  - Severe intellectual disability (1 study, n= 5)
  - Moderate to severe intellectual disability (1 study, n=4)
  - Mild to moderate intellectual disability (1 study, n=3)
  - Moderate, severe, and profound intellectual disability (1 study, n= 4)

- Ages ranged from 16 to adult

- Males (n=5), females (n=7)
  - None identified (1 study, n=4)

- Ethnicity
  - None reported (n= 16)

What is the practice?

Total task chaining is defined as a variation of forward chaining in which the learner receives training on each step in the task analysis during each session (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). Total task chaining is also sometimes referred to as concurrent training (McDonnell & Laughlin, 1989).

How has the practice been implemented?
• Total task chaining paired with community-based instruction has been used to teach use of laundry machine and soap dispenser (McDonnell & McFarland, 1988).
• Total task chaining has been used to teach purchasing of fast food items (McDonnell & Laughlin, 1989).
• Total task chaining paired with most to least prompting to has been used to teach bowling in the community (Vandercook, 1991).
• Total task chaining paired with time delay has been used to teach changing sanitary napkins (Ersoy, Tekin-Iftar, & Kiracaali-Iftar, 2009).

Where has it been implemented?

• Community (3 studies)
• Students’ home (1 study)

How does this practice relate to Common Core Standards?

• English Language Arts Standards, Reading Information Text
  CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.4, Craft and Structure
  Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

How does this practice relate to the Career Technical Core?

• Finance Career Cluster, Utilize tools, strategies and systems to plan, monitor, manage and maintain the use of financial resources.

References used to establish this evidence base:


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