Abstract

The mission of HANDS in Autism (Helping Answer Needs by Developing Specialists in Autism) is to provide practical and applicable information to a variety of caregivers from an ABA-based framework and to provide an option for training that promotes practical learning opportunities through an innovative and intensive hands-on and coaching experience. The primary goals and objectives of the model are to provide:

- a focus on individual strengths of each student
- a focus on comprehensive training (i.e., assessment to goal development)
- hands on learning with children of various levels of functioning and challenge
- training in a model of didactics combined with modeling, practice, and feedback in a supportive coaching environment

Methods

To best prepare for the hands-on component of the week-long training, baseline information was collected on the current knowledge, classroom structure, and implemented strategies utilized by each educator and professional participant. Educator and professional participants were asked to send in a copy of an IEP and a BP that they had prepared prior to the beginning of the training week. Program staff utilized this information to assess participants’ present level of performance.

Educator/professional participants attended eight hours of training per day for a five-day period. Educator/professional participants began each day by completing a Pre-Discussion Questionnaire pertaining to the corresponding training topic. Questionnaire topics included behavior, communication, social skills, classroom structure, and academic assessment. After training activities were completed, educator/professional participants were then asked to complete a Post-Discussion Questionnaire, identical to the Pre-Discussion Questionnaire as well as an evaluation corresponding to the material covered that day. In addition, on the final day of training, participants were asked to complete an evaluation relating to the training as a whole.

Results

The program seeks to bridge the gap between information learned in more traditional didactic/lecture training modalities and hands-on practical experience. Participants learn in an active environment through didactic, intensive hands-on practice, and feedback sessions. Ultimately, participants are asked to apply the principles learned through the didactic and observation opportunities presented during the training to diverse real-life situations as they interact with a variety of special children participating in age and behavioral and developmental profiles.

The program program would show effectiveness by the increased knowledge and understanding demonstrated by participants across the five modules (behavior, communication, social skills, and academic assessment) individually and as a whole.

In addition, participant ratings of the training program across several variables will demonstrate overall satisfaction with the training and provide feedback for improving subsequent training sessions.

Hypotheses

The training program would show effectiveness by the increased knowledge and understanding demonstrated by participants across the five modules (behavior, communication, social skills, and academic assessment) individually and as a whole.

For more information, visit our website at www.handsinautism.org