

Framework: Central Coherence

We continually take in information in order to make sense of our world. We must determine which details are relevant in a particular situation. We gather the physical details about the setting, the people involved, and the action that is taking place. We consider past activity and future possibilities. Connecting these details into a cohesive scene or event and then a larger narrative gives us a background or context in which to view, analyze, and recall critical elements.

Details, Context, Connections, Recall

- In any moment we are bombarded with details about our surroundings. We must choose to focus on the few that are important. To dwell on just one with the exclusion of all others will force us to miss critical information. If we attempt to take in all of the details we may become completely absorbed in that process. Choosing to consider the details that are relevant and cohesive is important if we are to make sense of what we see.

- As we knit together the relevant details around us we build a scene or event that includes the setting, people involved, and the action that is occurring. As we consider various aspects within the context of the entire scene we have a better understanding of the part each has, is, and will play. We discover greater meaning where a detail would remain ambiguous in isolation.

- We gather details that in some way are connected. They may have a physical connection to each other, a cause/effect relationship, a similarity, an absurdity, or a temporal aspect that ties them together. With such a richly colored event we can begin to see how it can be connected to other events to form a scenario. We can piece together a story in its proper sequence. Envisioning an event within the greater context of a story enhances its relevance and substance.

- We take in the details of our world and arrange them in the context of a story. The relationships we surmise and formulate are incredibly dense and meaningful. They allow us to think about and manipulate more than one idea at a time. We learn to think abstractly and problem solve. We find opportunity for pretense, humor, and inference. The detailed narratives we construct provide us with robust memories and critical recall of relevant and consequential information. We become thoughtful, capable, and creative in ways that enable us to survive and succeed in our endeavors.

Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:

- Children can be immersed in activities that encompass the critical elements of an event as a complete connected set of ideas.

- Language that describes these critical elements can be introduced as the child is ready to incorporate new information. The built-in redundancy of common experiences increases the speed of acquisition.

- Encourage children to create picture and word images of a scene and allow presentation to peers.

- Telling and retelling events enhances recall and encourages thinking about related information.

- Children can participate in sequencing and storytelling activities in which scenes and events are depicted and discussed.

- Common sequences involving daily activities such as cooking and hygiene can be pictured and manipulated to demonstrate temporal order. Text can be written to describe each picture. The sequence can then be retold.
- Children can be given frequent opportunity to hear and view oral presentations of nursery rhymes, fairytales, and stories.
- Frequent reading and rereading of picture books is essential. Discussion, recall and retelling enhance the experience.
- Name and discuss story structure elements when reading. Use wh-questions to check for understanding.
- Children can read to other children.
- Childrens cartoons and movies are great multimedia presentations of classic and new stories.
- Chapter books and novels can be analyzed for story structure.
- View movies and plays and then discuss story structure.
- Movies can be made using the planning tool of a story board.

A person with autism or other developmental delay might:

- focus attention on one preferred object and not notice other aspects of an event.
- dwell on objects and fail to put them in context with other parts of the scene.
- make limited superficial connections.
- have difficulty connecting one event with another.
- be unable to identify the elements of story structure.
- have difficulty perceiving a cause and effect relationship.
- struggle with wh- question forms and either not understand what is asked or not know the answer.
- not understand completely the text or language used to describe an event or comprehend connected speech and text that is not literal (figurative language: idiom, metaphor, simile, irony).
- notice lots of details in an event but be unable to put them into context and see the whole picture.
- not be able to listen, focus, or recall events told in a story.
- remember a movie as a whole but not be able to break it down into specific events.
- not perceive the emotions/feelings described in a story.
- not be able to determine cause and effect relationships inferred in a story or make predictions of events to follow.

- not be able to recall a story that might be similar to an idea or event being discussed or presented in text.
- not be able to comprehend what is being read in extended text in order to perceive the sequence and story structure.
- be preoccupied with sensory sensitivities.
- lack assumed skill levels in related areas.

User Friendly Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:

- Use manipulatives that separate out the various aspects of the event and important story elements.
- Use graphics to manipulate story sequence.
- Rely on visual displays and prompts rather than speech or text.
- Simplify and constrain text that is used.
- With the exception of fairytales, choose stories that have realistic characters, settings, and events that the child can relate to in real life. (animals do not talk or have other human characteristics, cars do not talk)
- Ask wh- questions about the constituent parts of a sentence describing an event.
- Intersperse wh- questions throughout all activities about the event. Pose multiple queries about one type of wh- question with multiple answers. Teach one before testing several types.
- Use visual images that make the eyes of the actor prominent.
- Name and emphasize any emotion and feeling that may be present.
- Use event aspects in numerous different types of activities that provide redundancy and encourage more varied and dense connections.
- Read, review, and reread stories many many times.
- Take photos of a child dramatizing a story, then use text to label each photo. Photos can then be manipulated and sequenced or made into a book.
- Use graphic organizers to analyze stories.
- Read graphic novels.
- Monitor text for instances of figurative speech and use graphics when possible to demonstrate meaning.
- When reading text ask for inferential information about cause and effect and prediction.
- Observe and detect sensory sensitivities to materials and environment and alter as necessary.
- Observe carefully to detect competencies in order to know what they don't know.

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