Framework: Developmental Triad

    Cognition, code, and communication form a critical triad of interrelated skills. Development in each area occurs in step with the other two creating basic relationships that in turn lead to higher levels of development.

Cognition, Code, and Communication:

- Cognition refers to how and what we think about the world around us. Our experiences are processed and ideas are formed. Comparisons are made, conclusions are drawn, and connections are formed with other ideas. Memories are continually being adjusted to accommodate new information. Manipulation and connectivity are critical aspects of learning. Events become abstract elements in a specific temporal order and then form scenarios. These stories contain the thoughts and feelings that reflect what we think about the world around us. Common scenarios bind us to the culture we live in and allow us to succeed and survive.

- Code refers to the language that we use to express ideas. Words, phrases and sentences are chosen to describe simple concepts or complex ideas and the relationships formed between them. Detailed, specific information exchange requires sophisticated syntactic and semantic connected utterances that are heard, spoken, read or written.

- Communication refers to the act of sending a message to another person. When performing this message exchange there is an all-important social interaction. These exchanges are complex and involve verbal and nonverbal components. They are often charged with feeling and emotion. Connected conversation requires significant cognitive flexibility, language competence, and knowledge of the unwritten rules of social exchange within a culture.

Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:

- Children learn when immersed in activities that encompass the critical elements of an event as a complete connected event or scenario.

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

- Telling and retelling scenarios enhances recall and encourages exchange of related information.

A person with autism or other developmental delay might:

- dwell on objects and fail to put them in context with the person in the scene.

- struggle to derive meaning from speech or text.

- not focus on the eye gaze of the person in the scene.

- experience the emotion that may be present but miss the nuance of feeling that should follow.

- be preoccupied with sensory sensitivities.

- make limited superficial connections.

- lack assumed skill levels in related areas.

User Friendly Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:

- Use manipulatives that separate out the various aspects of an event or scenario.

- Rely on visual displays and prompts rather than speech or text.

- Use visual images that make the eyes of the actor prominent.

- Observe and detect sensory sensitivities to materials and environment and alter as necessary.

- 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.

- Observe carefully to detect competencies in order to know what they don't know.