**INCREASING ACADEMIC TASK COMPLETION WITHOUT AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR IN A STUDENT WITH ASD**

**Rebecca Ensor, Kyly Chmiel, Rebecca Ward**

**Phoenix Centre for Learning, Brock University**

**Objective:** Challenging behaviour such as aggression is often demonstrated by students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), greatly inhibiting classroom learning (McComas, Hoch, Paone, El-Roy, 2000). This interferes with the ability to attend to an instructor and engage in learning activities. Common interventions include use of Premack principle, differential reinforcement and escape extinction (Ducharme, Lucas, Edite Pontes, 1994). These strategies have been unsuccessful for the current client, indicating the need for a more intensive intervention. The program aim was to reduce aggression (i.e., grabbing, hitting, throwing, swiping items) and disruptive (i.e., elopement to windows, flopping) behaviours to near zero levels, and increase this client’s ability to sit and complete pre-academic activities for up to 15-minutes.

**Method:** The participant was a six-year-old male diagnosed with severe ASD who had received 1:1 Applied Behaviour Analytic services two days per week for 4.5months**.** A functional analysis was completed with four conditions: denial of requests, attention, alone, and play (control). Results indicated that the client primarily engaged in aggressive behaviour when requests were denied (i.e., denied access to toy or activity). An intervention was implemented to increase tolerance to denied requests; however, staff interviews indicated that disruptive behaviours continued during academic demands. As a result, a low percentage of time was spent engaging in learning activities. Baseline measures indicated that the client was able to complete an average of 19 teaching tasks per session while engaging in disruptive behaviour for an average of 12 minutes per session. One therapy room in the treatment centre was designated as his work space; all items were removed except for the table, chairs, work materials and reinforcers. The room selected did not include windows as they were previously a source of distraction. A tolerance-building program was also implemented where demands were faded to high probability tasks. The client was required to engage in academic tasks for a specified time interval prior to reinforcement. Reinforcement included escape from task demands/learning environment, and access to requested items. This task requirement increased with the achievement of predetermined criteria. The independent variable was length of academic task demands required to access reinforcement. Dependent variables included: duration of challenging behaviour, number of successful teaching trials, and duration of on-task behaviour. Reversal probes (i.e., back to baseline environment for one hour weekly) will be used to establish experimental control and suggest whether or not this intervention is responsible for behaviour change.

**Results:** This client is in phase two of the intervention. Results are currently being coded and analyzed.

**Discussion**

This intervention targets two environments: the ABA centre and a simulated classroom. Once he is able to engage in learning activities for 15-minute intervals in the therapy room without challenging behaviour, generalization to a simulated classroom will take place. By shaping this skill, it will allow him to learn academic skills and participate in a classroom similar to his school environment. This poster will explore the results of this intervention, and the impact on his learning.

**Correspondence.**

Rebecca Ensor, M.ADS

re14nn@brocku.ca

Kyly Chmiel, M.ADS., BCBA

kyly@phoenixcentreniagara.ca

Rebecca Ward Ph.D., C. Psych., BCBA-D

rebeccaward@phoenixcentreniagara.ca

References

Ducharme, J., Lucas, H. and Pontes, E. (1994). Errorless embedding in the reduction of severe maladaptive behavior during interactive and learning tasks. *Behavior Therapy, 25* (3).

McComas, J., Hoch, H., Paone, D., and El-Roy, D. (2000). Escape behavior during academic tasks: A preliminary analysis of idiosyncratic establishing operations. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 33*.