Abstract

MORE THAN WORDS is a family-focused program that gives parents and caregivers of young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) practical tools to help their children communicate and develop socialization. Developed by the Hanen Centre in Toronto, Canada, it is led by a Hanen certified Speech Language Pathologist to a small group of families. 

A Social-Pragmatic Developmental approach, More Than Words is based on the belief that children with social communication difficulties learn to communicate best through structured natural interaction. There is evidence that the behavior of parents affects the subsequent development of their children’s communication. The More Than Words program allows parents to learn and practice strategies introduced through lecture, role-playing, and video feedback sessions. 

A survey was devised and sent to 370 families who participated in a More Than Words course. The results presented here were produced out of a Database developed after the input of the initial twenty returned survey, and will be continuing forward.

Trends

The Tables below suggest the the Strategy “OWL” remains effective, as reported by parent respondents, throughout all stages of progress.

The OWL Strategy was developed by Hanen so that parents with children at the earliest stage of communication have very specific approaches to use immediately. The data suggests that this Strategy continues to also remain effective throughout later stages.

Selected More Than Words Program Strategies

OWL Acronym: Observe, Wait, Listen
Face 1 Acronym: Inviting into activities your child does alone, imitating your child’s actions and sounds, include your child’s interests in activities done together, interpreting any sounds or gestures from your child, as if they have meaning.

The B.O.C.K. Acronym:
Repeat what you say and do
Offer your child opportunities for communication
Cue your child to take turns
Keep it fun, keep it going

Visual Helpers to explain the following:
- What’s going to happen
- The child’s feelings and the feelings of others
- How to do things independently what he needs to know about difficult situations

The numerical whole integer values shown were then assigned to the Communication Stages in the creation of our Database.

Trends

The Tables immediately below display graphs summarizing reported data for all respondents to date.

Improvement in their child’s communications skills by at least 1 year stages was reported by all but one parent. In the Database, numerical values have been established for the Hanen-based Communication Stages (as detailed above) and the transitions between them, enabling tracking of a numerical improvement Delta.

Because the Database also now includes Child’s Date of Birth, Program Start Date, and Child Age At Program – as well as communication stages both at Program Start and as reported To Date, it can provide important multi-criteria relationships via graphing.

MTW Database

The multi-criteria graph above suggests that children whose stage-progress Delta were the highest were those whose ages on beginning the program were under 3.10 years.

In the graph data set shown, those were specifically between two years, one month (2-1) (Age As Decimal: 2.167) and three years, five months (3-5) (Age As Decimal: 3.417).

References


Unique Responses by Parents

Building this Database also enabled the compilation of Unique Responses by Parents.

Excerpts

The most helpful aspect was thinking like my child and to “say it as she would if she could”....

The program helped my husband and me ROCK with our son, getting down to his eye level and engaging him constantly. We let him set the agenda and when he sees us super interested in what he is doing, he will more likely perform the tasks we request of him. The more we create moments of engagement, the more language we hear him develop.

The most helpful aspects were turning everyday routines to opportunities...

These are provided at length in the Accompanying Document.