

## **Lesson Plan**

**Objective:** To extend **preference and choice-making** to promote and enhance the involvement of students with mild mental retardation in their transition to community living.

**Setting and materials:** Classroom setting with group sessions lasting approximately 30-70 minutes and contained from one to four trials per student. Audio, video taping equipment; Lifestyle preference photo albums (14cm x 11cm), each page containing a lifestyle preference picture, the corresponding question, and three boxes labeled *yes*, *no*, and *maybe*.

### **Content taught**

Phase I: An interview format is used to assess students' choice-making skills for expressing their community living life style preferences.

Phase II: Procedures are developed to assess students' strongest life style preferences.

Phase III: Students are given training in how to assess the availability of their life style preferences in group homes and then give this information to their social worker.

### **Teaching procedure**

#### ***Phase I***

- Two 15-question sets for preference assessments are developed: one containing the questions students most frequently rated as being most important and the other, those most often identified as not important.
- To facilitate responding and to minimize errors associated with interview formats, two pictures illustrating contrasting life style options for each of the 30 preference items are used in conjunction with either-or questions.
- Students are tested individually. Students are told that the purpose of the test is to identify some of their life style preferences in a group home.
- The teacher points to and labels each pair of photos as they are presented to the student and asks the student to repeat the label. After the student labels the photos, the teacher presents the either-or question designed to cue preference selection.
- Students have approximately 10 seconds to respond or the question is repeated.
- Whenever the students point to a photo to indicate their preference, they are asked to confirm this selection by describing it. Students are tested on three occasions. Each test lasts 30-40 minutes.

## ***Phase II***

- Each student's life style preferences from Phase I are arranged into the two 15-item sets.
- Each student's 10 strongest preferences across the 30 items are identified by having the teacher conduct three forced-choice comparison tests between the sets. In each test the preference pairings are arranged so that a preference from one set is always paired with a preference from the other set with which it had not been paired previously.
- Two tests are conducted the same day and a third, 4 days later. In each comparison, the teacher labels the photos (from Phase I) that depict the student's preference and prompt a choice by asking the subject to describe and point to the one that is more desirable in a group home.
- Each student's 10 strongest life style preferences are identified using the following criteria: A preference item selected in all three tests is included and a preference selected two times also is included if at least one other student had selected it in all three tests.

## ***Phase III***

During Phase III students were taught to obtain preference availability information from a group home representative and report these findings to a teacher. Prior to training, the students' reading skills were assessed in relation to the words in their preference questions. Instruction is provided in a group format.

1. In the initial session the teacher describes the skill area, provides a rationale for its importance, distributes the preference photo albums, and describes their contents. The teacher uses a combination of instruction, modeling and role-playing to demonstrate question-asking. The students then take turns using the photo album.
2. The teacher plays the role of a tour guide and students take turns initiating question asking, asking questions, and terminating interaction. The teacher provides response-specific feedback and praise for correct responding. She also interrupts when students misread words or make incorrect responses, and uses prompts to elicit a correct response.
3. Students are taught to ask the tour guide to respond to their preference questions with a *yes*, *no* or *maybe*. After students role-play this and practice scoring in their albums, the teacher demonstrates how to use the album to report information that had been scored.
4. Students are encouraged to provide each other with feedback.
5. The teacher can use two techniques to reduce errors and promote acquisition: (1) prime appropriate questions by describing the preference photo prior to the students reading the corresponding question; and (2) teach students to put paperclips on each page of the album, and remove each paperclip after asking the question on that page.

### **Method of evaluation**

- In Phase I, response consistency is determined when a student chooses the same option in any two test item comparison.
- In Phase II, the validity of students' 10 preference selections are assessed by asking people who know the student well to indicate whether or not they thought these selections were accurate.
- In Phase III, a correct report is scored when students accurately convey the preference information they received during the preceding tour.

**Based on:** Foxx, R. M., Faw, G. D., Taylor, S., Davis, P. K., & Fulia, R. (1993). "Would I be able to..."? Teaching clients to assess the availability of their community living life style preferences. American Journal on Mental Retardation, 98, 235-248.