



Contemporary Approaches to Intervention:
Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communications-Handicapped Children (TEACCH)

Special thanks to Andrew Angeles and Kenay Sudler

Background: TEACCH was developed by Dr. Eric Schoplet in 1972. The TEACCH autism program is a treatment and educational philosophy that promotes individualized support for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) by creating activities and environments that emphasize meaningfulness. Goals include providing evidence-based services to clients and families in the community, meeting the needs of infants, toddlers, adolescents, and adults with ASD, and providing job-training opportunities for individuals with ASD. The administrative headquarters are located in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The TEACCH philosophy is based on an understanding about the “culture of autism” which can be defined as a way of thinking about the characteristics and behaviors of individuals with ASD. These characteristics include:

- Difficulty with the concept of meaning
- A preference for processing visual information as opposed to auditory information
- Marked sensory preferences and dislikes
- Attachment to routines
- Attention to detail
- Strong interest in certain activities
- Difficulty combining and organizing ideas
- Difficulty with time transitions
- Social language problems

Population: Individuals of all ages with Autism Spectrum Disorder, other communication disorders, and their families.

Description: The TEACCH model relies on a concept called Structured TEACCHing which consists of the following elements:

- Individualized assessment
- Organization of the physical environment
- Predictable sequences of activities
- Visual schedules
- Flexible routines
- Work/activity systems
- Visually structured activities

In some ways this approach is similar to Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), because it shares the concept of creating a highly structured learning environment. Unlike ABA, it does not create structure by repeating prompt-trial reinforcement patterns in order to avoid prompt-dependence. Instead, as in the Montessori approach, structure is provided by the environment, organizational strategies, and the presentation of materials.

Cost:

- North Carolina residents
 - 1 Day Training = \$50
 - 5 Day Training = \$650
- Non-North Carolina residents
 - 1 Day Training = \$100
 - 5 Day Training = \$1400

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individualized approach to intervention. ● Methods are applicable to individuals of any age. ● Emphasis on including parents in the therapeutic process. ● Flexible, relatively affordable trainings, for parents and professionals. ● Educates others about how those with Autism Spectrum Disorders learn and function. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The TEACCH “method” is not explicitly explained. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No clear steps ○ No set amount of hours for trainings. ● Individuals in North Carolina have greater access to TEACCH trainings and resources. ● Lack of research reviewing the efficacy of the TEACCH method. ● Lack of emphasis on language skills including pragmatic and verbal language.

Additional Information:

TEACCH Trainings

The TEACCH program offers one to five day workshops where theoretical and practical information about the TEACCH approach to ASD is taught. Attendees include teachers, psychologists, parents, administrators, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists. A large number of trainings are provided in North Carolina, but collaborations with programs and agencies allow for additional trainings outside of the state. Follow-up consultation is available for teachers in North Carolina.

Short Term/Long Term Efficacy

Schopler, Mesibov, & Baker (1982) surveyed 657 past and present students in TEACCH, and split them into 4 groups: Those who had only received a diagnostic evaluation, those who had received an evaluation and parent training, those who had received an evaluation and placement in a TEACCH classroom, and those who had received an evaluation, parent training, and placement in a TEACCH classroom. Of the 348 surveys returned, the majority of participants said that Project TEACCH had been helpful, and the authors reported lower institutionalization rates for their students. However, there were multiple problems with the design of this study, such as a lack of information about how participants were placed into groups, how many were in each group, the fact that only 51% of participants had autism, and a lack of indication about the anonymity of the survey. There are few other studies on the efficacy of TEACCH in publication.

For more information and training:

Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communications-Handicapped Children website: www.teacch.com

Sources:

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Training and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children

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