Active Learning Principles

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This powerpoint covers the following topics:
Participants will be able to:
1. Share basic information about Active Learning with someone else
2. Identify the role of play in learning

It will take approximately 45-60 minutes to present.
About this session

- This session is meant to introduce you to the basics of Active Learning, an instructional approach developed by Dr. Lilli Nielsen of Denmark.
- This presentation utilizes content on Active Learning Space, a collaborative website developed by Penrickton Center for Blind Children, Perkins School for the Blind and Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired.

As you introduce the session, encourage participants to go to the Active Learning Space website on their phone, tablet or computer. The url is www.activelearningspace.org
Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:
1. Share basic information about Active Learning with another individual
2. Identify the role of play in learning
Section One:

Overview of Active Learning
Overview of Active Learning

On the Home Page of Active Learning Space you can:
• Download a guide
• Sign-up for a mailing list for updates and e-newsletter
• Sign-up for Pinterest

You may want to share the guide as a handout or just point it out to the participants. This provides links to specific pages on the website that they can use to easily find important information on various topics. It is important for participants to be able to share basic information about Active Learning in order to advocate for this approach for their student. Parents, administrators and others may never have heard of this approach before. They may not understand that the students who are targeted for this approach have the most significant challenges and typically function below 48 months developmentally. That means they learn differently for other students who are developmentally older (the average age of pre-kindergartener or kindergartener or older) since all humans are first sensorimotor and then pre-operational level learners according to research done by child psychologists. More will be shared about this later.

The e-newsletter comes out approximately every 4-6 weeks and will help folks stay informed about additions to the site, training events, and other information.

Some folks enjoy Pinterest and this is another way to get information about Active Learning.
Take time to have participants watch these two videos.
It is important to be able to briefly explain Active Learning to individuals who are not familiar with the approach and who may not have experience working with students who are visually impaired and/or have significant additional disabilities.
Using these videos (Lives Changed at Penrickton Center and Jack’s Progress) may help you to do this.
Have the participants work with their shoulder-partner to create a list of things they learned about Active Learning. Give them about 2 minutes to do this then have them share their results.

The next slides mention some of the keys points to emphasize.
Developed by Danish psychologist and educator, Dr. Lilli Nielsen, for children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities

Targets individuals who are primarily at the 0-48 month level developmentally, no matter what their chronological age

Overview of Active Learning
An Active Learning approach recognizes that learning for individuals with multiple disabilities takes much longer because of sensory and motor challenges.

An Active Learning approach emphasizes that all individuals learn best by active participation.
Overview of Active Learning

It is closely tied to evidence-based research, such as the work of Jean Piaget's developmental stages of learners.

All activity, especially in the earliest stages of development, actually "wires our brains" and establishes critical foundational concepts and skills necessary for all future learning.

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Individuals with multiple disabilities are at great risk for developing reliance on others to interact with the world around them.

They learn to be a passive rather than active participant, waiting for adults to provide activity rather than seeking it out on their own.
Children and adults with special needs often develop stereotypical or aggressive behaviors in order to communicate with others or cope within the environments in which they are placed.
Overview of Active Learning

Programming and intervention must reflect individuality of each learner.

We seek to create learners with multiple special needs who can be active learners.

Environments and activities for learning utilize specialized equipment or “perceptualizing aids” and interesting, everyday materials.

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Overview of Active Learning

Develops tactual skills that support learning for an individual with visual impairments

Helps reduce tactual defensiveness many of these children feel because of invasive touch

Self-injurious or challenging behaviors reduced by providing appropriate stimulation

Although we hope a child will gain independence that is not the over-riding goal of Active Learning. These children may never reach independence in completing tasks, but they can learn new and critical skills needed for life and continued learning.
Section 2:

What Is Play?
Ask the large group of participants to share words or phrases that describe play:
What are some words that describe play?
MOTOR BASED
FUN
SPONTANEOUS OFTEN
CAN BE DONE ALONE OR WITH OTHERS
MAY BE REPETITIVE
MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE RULES
MOTIVATING
ETC.
Here are three quotes about play.

*Play is often overlooked as the key that helps unlock the door to learning.*”
Mary Reilly 1974

Play is:
A complex set of behaviors characterized by fun and spontaneity
Play can be sensory, neuromuscular, cognitive & any combination of the three
Play involves repetition of experience, exploration, experimentation, and imitation of one’s surroundings
Linda L. Florey 1981

"Play is the universal language of childhood. It is through play that children understand each other and make sense of the world around them."
Play Scotland
Have the participants share with each other (2 minutes) about how typical children play. Report out to the larger group.

How do typically developing children play at age:
Birth-12 months?
1-2 years?
3-4 years?
4+ years?
Talk to your shoulder partner and discuss examples that you have seen? Takes notes so you can share.
What is Play?

Let’s listen as Patty Obrzut, Assistant Director of Penrickton Center for Blind Children discusses the importance of play in this video, What is Play?

Watch this video with your participants which lasts 8:59

You may want to read the article from the American Academy of Pediatrics on the importance of play prior to teaching this section. The article may be downloaded at http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/3/e20182058.full-text.pdf
Ask these questions of the group and have them share their thoughts. (About 2 minutes)

Why would children who have multiple sensory, motor and/or cognitive abilities behave differently in their play?
What might we expect to see from them instead?
Share some of these points with the group if they have not been mentioned in the discussion. You may want to elaborate on specific points based on your experiences with specific students.

Hopefully much of this information will have been generated in the previous discussion. In that case this can be a summary of main points.

### Why are they different?
- Low energy due to multiple physical and medical problems and medications
- Insecurity of lack of trust due to sensory impairment
- Aversive response to touch from medical interventions, inappropriate or invasive touch
- Highly stressed due to limited visual and/or auditory information
- Lack of awareness about people and objects in their environment
- Lack of ability to move to engage objects in their environment

### What you might see?
- Passiveness
- Self-stimulatory behaviors
- Tactual defensiveness
- Reluctance or inability to interact with others
- Inability to participate in play with objects or others
- Inability to initiate and sustain an interaction and communication with others
- More interactions with adults than with peers

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**What is play?**

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What is play?

Ask yourself:
How do your students who are significantly disabled spend their day in the classrooms you see?
Who do they interact with?
How much of their day is spent in direct instruction?
How much of their day is spent in therapy?
Do they have time to play and do you see them playing?
Do they have authentic relationships with their peers?
This chart is meant to drive home the major differences in how children with and without major disabilities spend their days and why Active Learning is needed.

All children initially learn through play....their own self-activity.
These children are denied access to play because of their multiple disabilities.
Children with multiple disabilities need opportunities to play in similar ways.
We do this in Active Learning by bringing the world to them through special designed learning environments and activities.
We use specialized techniques of interactions to help the child develop critical emotional and social skills.
We provide instruction that allows for both independent and interactive activity.
The foundational concepts that all children form in the earliest stage of learning are the basis for the development of language and communication skills.
We recognize that learning through play is different from the type of instruction that is provided in typical educational programming because children by the age of 5 or 6 have the foundational skills to learn in other ways.
Credits

This content was developed by Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired Outreach Program and may not be used without their express permission. This content is based on the Active Learning Space website, collaboratively developed by Penrickton Center for Blind, Perkins School for the Blind and Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Special contributions of content and images of Active Learning instruction comes from Narbethong State Special School in Australia.

All content is based on the original work of Dr. Lilli Nielsen of Denmark. Our thanks to her family and the staff at Byhaveskolen, Svendborg, Denmark for making her work available to educators world-wide.

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