

Education and Innovation Committee

From: ABIQ1 <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, 18 September 2013 11:35 AM
To: Education and Innovation Committee
Subject: Education Amendment Bill - Strengthening Discipline in State Schools

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing in regard to the Education Amendment Bill - Strengthening Discipline in State Schools. This has only just been brought to my attention and I realise that I have missed the date for submissions but I would like to convey my grave concerns for children diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) in regard to the above Amendment Bill.

Many of the symptoms associated with autistic spectrum disorders lead to behavioural difficulties. There is a range of reasons why children with ASD have difficulties with behaviour. Their fundamental difficulties with communication and social interaction are often the root cause of difficult behaviour.

I am concerned that suspension and exclusion is used on students with ASD in the absence of positive behavioural support plans developed by qualified mental health clinicians with experience in applied behavioural analysis. Punishment strategies are not effective for altering behaviours in persons with autism.

A large body of evidence provides empirical support for the use of positive behavioural supports as the first course of treatment for problem behaviour for children with ASD.

ABA therapy is based on the principle that influencing a response associated with a particular behaviour may cause that behaviour to be shaped and controlled. ABA therapy is a mixture of psychological and educational techniques that are tailored to the needs of each individual child to alter their behaviours. ABA involves the use of behavioural methods to measure behaviour, teach functional skills, and evaluate progress.

The main focus of any behavioural intervention should always be on the development of new skills to help the child to cope with his or her environment and to communicate their needs. To make this change lasting, the aim is to provide him or her with other ways of achieving the outcome, previously achieved through difficult behaviour. This means that he or she will have a new way of communicating and will not need to rely on the difficult behaviour. There are several ways to encourage the development of new skills by the way we respond to the child with an autistic spectrum disorder.

As well as ABA another effective tool to manage behaviour is Positive Behavioural Support. As stated in the website http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/pbs_fs.aspx -

“All students, both disabled and non-disabled, can benefit from Positive Behavioural Supports (PBS):

- Research conducted over the past 15 years has shown that PBS is effective in promoting positive behavior in students and schools. Use of PBS as a strategy to maintain appropriate social behavior will make schools safer. Safer schools are more effective learning environments.
- Schools that implement system-wide interventions also report increased time engaged in academic activities and improved academic performance.
- Schools that employ system-wide interventions for problem behavior prevention indicate reductions in office discipline referrals of 20-60%.

- Appropriately implemented PBS can lead to dramatic improvements that have long-term effects on the lifestyle, functional communication skills, and problem behavior in individuals with disabilities.
- A review of research on PBS effectiveness showed that there was over a 90% reduction in problem behavior in over half of the studies; the problem behavior stopped completely in over 26% of the studies”

The Education Department is failing a lot of children with autism. With 1 in 100 children being diagnosed with autism in Australia it is time for the Education Department to come up with better solutions to the problems children with autism are experiencing in the school environment. All children are entitled to an education. As Lovaas said “If they can’t learn the way we teach, we need to teach the way they learn”.

Regards

Sharon Horan

ABIQ Secretary

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www.abiq.org

Autism Behavioural Intervention Queensland (ABIQ)



ABIQ will be holding a Teaching Social Skills Information Session on 11 October. For further information visit www.abiq.org