THEY COULD PARTICIPATE IN SHOW & TELL

meet KRISTEN WHOOLERY

Kristen Whoolery is a Speech Language Pathologist who works with children in the classroom. She's easily integrated Robot–Assisted Instruction (RAI) into her sessions, stating that it's been life–changing for her.

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takeaways

- children with anxiety seemed more relaxed

- the children increased their level of communication

- the robot led students through tasks they usually struggled with

ABOUT KRISTEN WHOOLERY

Kristen Whoolery is a Speech Language Pathologist who works with children in preschool through second grade, at an average of 30 minutes per session. Her group therapy sizes have ranged from 3 to 5 children during the COVID-19 pandemic and up to 12 children in years before. Ms. Whoolery has worked with Robot-Assisted Instruction (RAI) for two years. "My students have a positive response to the robot," says Ms. Whoolery. "They see the robot as their friend [and] respect his personal space. They love to give the robot a hug goodbye and hello." Since the robot is always happy and smiling, comments Ms. Whoolery, children with anxiety seem much more relaxed. RAI easily and naturally fits into her therapy sessions with students. She reinforces her work with the RAI by using YouTube Videos and imitating what the robot is doing: "Improvements have been joint attention, turn-taking, patience, following directions, social skills, pragmatic language, [and] maintaining skills." Ms. Whoolery notes that children love imitating the robot's lessons, such as Warmup and Brushing Teeth, pretending to go through the task the robot leads them in. "It has been life-changing for myself," Ms. Whoolery says in sum, "and I have really enjoyed seeing the robot's interaction with the students and how it has changed their lives."

THE CHALLENGE

Ms. Whoolery works with higher-functioning children with autism who have a mean length of utterance of 3 to 10 words. These students are working primarily on improving their expressive and receptive language, as well as social language skills (such as sharing ideas, turn-taking, and topic maintenance).

HOW MOVIA HELPED

Some lessons Ms. Whoolery uses with these children are learning how to brush teeth, sharing ideas, identifying emotions and sharing when we feel those emotions, and following directions. Students may be provided with props used during the Robot-Assisted Instruction, such as in the brushing teeth lesson. Ms. Whoolery provides the students with a pretend mouth, toothbrush, and cup to imitate the lesson. The students enjoyed the process, completing the lesson with minimal prompts. The students were then provided a disposable oral swab to imitate brushing their own teeth. Students who typically have a difficult time brushing their teeth were completing the lesson with no sensory difficulties. In another session, students were completing the sharing ideas lesson with the Robot. The students went through the lesson and learned about waiting your turn and that, when a friend is talking, we talk about what they are talking about. Many autistic students have a difficult time during show and tell and will listen to their friends share their ideas, but then begin to talk about the toy they brought instead. With the Robot lesson and visual, students were able to stay on topic and actively participate in the show and tell. With the robot, Ms. Whoolery has seen improvement in the areas these children struggle with, leading to them sharing ideas, refraining from interrupting others, increasing communication, having more motivation, and reducing disruptive behaviors.

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