



Marcus

Understands Sarcasm and Figurative Language (RS.20)

During VOISS lessons, Marcus learned how to tell the difference between sarcasm and literal language. He also learned that sometimes his peers used figurative language to express themselves (e.g., “My mom has told me to clean my room like a million times”), which should also not be taken literally. He came to understand that sarcasm is when someone says something that is the opposite of what they mean, often in an attempt to be funny. He learned that people often use a different tone of voice when making sarcastic comments.

Although Marcus could correctly identify sarcasm in VOISS lessons, Ms. Jones wanted to make sure he could apply these skills to responding appropriately to sarcasm in everyday conversation. She created a lesson to help Marcus practice the skill of understanding sarcasm and figurative language (Relationship Skill 20).

VOISS ADVISOR Lesson Plan Outline

Relationship Skill 20: Understands Sarcasm and Figurative Language

Define the social skill to be demonstrated in observable and measurable terms. This should be the skill you want the student to use when the situation/opportunity naturally occurs.

- When a peer makes a sarcastic comment, Marcus will respond to the intended meaning of the comment or make a similar sarcastic comment on 9/10 opportunities.

Identify the generalization emphasis:

- Setting generalization

Identify the instructional setting:

- 1-1

Identify the instructional method to be used:

- Direct instruction

Select the generalization tactic(s) to be used:

- Train others to prompt and reinforce
- Teach multiple examples

Select the support strategy/strategies to be used:

- Reinforcement



GENERALIZING THE SKILLS

Ms. Jones decided to focus on generalization across settings. She wanted Marcus to respond appropriately to sarcasm during conversations before school, at lunch, and during passing periods. These were the environments in which Marcus was most likely to talk to peers and encounter sarcastic comments in conversations.

Ms. Jones operationally defined one outcome that indicated her generalization lessons were effective:

- When a peer makes a sarcastic comment, Marcus will respond to the intended meaning of the comment or make a similar sarcastic comment on 9/10 opportunities.

CHOOSING AN INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD AND SETTING

Ms. Jones decided the nuances involved in identifying sarcasm would require direct instruction, so it would be appropriate to work 1-1 with Marcus rather than in a setting with his peers. Marcus often had free time during homeroom because he finished his work early. Ms. Jones decided she could pull Marcus for 1-1 instruction during the last half hour of this class period three days a week. As peers often left homeroom for help on core subjects, Marcus wouldn't be stigmatized for leaving during that period.

- Instructional Setting: 1-1
- Instructional Method: Direct instruction

CHOOSING A GENERALIZATION TACTIC AND SUPPORT STRATEGY

Next, Ms. Jones chose a generalization tactic. Because Mr. Park, Marcus's paraprofessional, was with him through much of the day, Ms. Jones decided she would teach Mr. Park to prompt and reinforce Marcus during conversations with others.

Though Marcus wanted to socialize with peers, it required a lot of effort from Marcus. Ms. Jones hoped socializing could become naturally reinforcing, but knew Marcus still required additional support. Mr. Park would use Marcus's token reinforcement system to support appropriate responses to sarcastic comments. Ms. Jones also decided she would teach multiple examples (and non-examples) of sarcasm during instruction.

- Generalization Tactic: Train others to prompt and reinforce, teach multiple examples
- Support Strategy: Reinforcement



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Ms. Jones's Lesson on

“Understanding Sarcasm and Figurative Language”



DEVELOPING THE DIRECT INSTRUCTION LESSON

Ms. Jones prepared for the lesson by searching YouTube for clips of conversations involving sarcastic comments. She planned to teach multiple examples by gathering many clips of comments made by different people, in different settings, and relating to different topics.



IMPLEMENTING THE LESSON WITH MARCUS

During her 1-1 direct instruction lesson with Marcus, Ms. Jones modeled how to identify sarcastic and literal comments within a few video clips. She paused each clip after a sarcastic or literal comment. She described the comment as sarcastic or literal, described how she knew the comment was sarcastic or literal, and provided an appropriate comment to say in response.

For example, in a YouTube clip from a popular TV show, three characters are crying while watching a sad movie. Another character makes fun of them for crying, and the crying characters ask if he cried during the movie *Bambi*, after *Bambi's* mother passes away. He responds, “Yes, it was very sad when they stopped drawing the deer.”

Ms. Jones then froze the clip. She explained, “This is sarcastic. The character was not sad when he watched *Bambi*. I know this because he was just teasing the other characters about crying during movies. I can also tell he was being sarcastic because his voice sounded annoyed. Because I know he did not think *Bambi* was sad, I can respond

with my own opinion. I could say something about the intended meaning of his comment like, ‘I know it’s a cartoon and not real, but it’s still a sad story.’” Ms. Jones explained that Marcus could also respond with a sarcastic comment: “Yeah, and it was also very sad when they ran out of dessert at lunch today.”

Next, Ms. Jones and Marcus identified comments in videos as sarcastic or literal together. They talked about why they knew a comment was sarcastic or literal and discussed appropriate responses to sarcastic comments. Finally, Ms. Jones asked Marcus to go through this process independently with several clips. She provided corrective and reinforcing feedback as needed. She told Marcus to go through this process in his head if he ever found himself in a conversation and felt unsure if a comment was literal or sarcastic.



RECRUITING SUPPORT FROM THE PARAPROFESSIONAL

Ms. Jones then met with Mr. Park, Marcus’s paraprofessional to train him to prompt and reinforce Marcus. She explained what she had taught Marcus about sarcasm and literal language. She asked Mr. Park to give Marcus some space when he was engaged in conversations, but to listen to how he responded when peers made sarcastic comments. She suggested that he wait until the conversation ended and then explicitly tell Marcus if his response or actions were appropriate or inappropriate. Marcus would earn token reinforcement if he responded appropriately (i.e., he responded to the peer’s intended message).

NATIONAL AND STATE STANDARDS BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS

RS.20 UNDERSTANDS SARCASTIC AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

COLLABORATIVE FOR ACADEMIC, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (CASEL) STANDARDS

- Relationship Skills

KANSAS SOCIAL EMOTIONAL CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT (KSECD) STANDARDS

- Social Development
- Interpersonal Skills

- A. Demonstrate communication and social skills to interact effectively.
 - 6-8 (11-13) 2. Monitor how facial expressions, body language, and tone impact interactions.

Personal Development

- Self- Management
 - A. Understand and practice strategies for managing and regulating thoughts and behaviors.
 - 6-8 (11-13) 7. Practice effective communication (for example, listening, reflecting and responding).

