

YOUR ATN @ WORK: UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING PUBERTY, HEALTH AND HYGIENE

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With the recent publication of the Puberty and Autism Toolkit, our families were asking for more. They had questions and concerns about how to talk to and teach their child with autism about puberty. Many children with autism are not included in the puberty talks in their schools. If they are, the information is

often not modified for unique learning styles.

We developed a Just for Girls and Just for Boys Hygiene and Puberty class using the toolkits as a guide. Each 4-week program respectively utilized a multi-sensorial approach. Each topic was given a dedicated session. Each session broke down the topics by presenting it visually to the group in a power point presentation.

Just for Boys:

Week 1: What is puberty and noticing changes in your body

Week 2: What to do with changes in your body unique to a boy

Week 3: Hygiene schedules and healthy living

Week 4: Shaving, grooming and putting it all together

Just for Girls:

Week 1: What is puberty and noticing changes in your body

Week 2: What to do with changes in your body unique to a girl

Week 3: Hygiene schedules and healthy living

Week 4: Caring for your menstrual cycle and putting it all together

Presented in a small group, each subject matter was

taught using a power point guide that was developed as a visual explanation. The science behind each topic was discussed, and then the practical applications explained, via social stories and videos. Hand-on applicate and practice occurred, with hygiene kits, including washing faces, brushing teeth, shaving and changing maxi pads.

This hands-on approach included parents too. Parents were required to review the program and commit to working with their children toward their weekly homework assignment that was turned into the group each week. Parents joined their children and the instructors during hygiene practice, and a home routine and schedule was developed for homework for the week.

The use of behavioral principles were embedded in the class. Each subject matter was primed with the use of verbal information, and visual expectations in the power point. Students were given factual information, video models to follow and opportunity to ask questions and ask for clarification. Weekly schedules and self-monitoring health and hygiene charts were provided with parents present. Parents and their children then worked together to determine what time of day and how their hygiene and healthy living would occur in real life. Parents and children were given copies of homework and supplemental visuals schedules and encouraged to post them in specific locations. Making reminders on iPad calendars and using apps to track daily checklists were encouraged.

“This particular class was timely for us as Allison’s public school will approach this subject in a few weeks but I am sure there approach will be much more ‘clinical’ and not as hands on for what she needs”

“I love this class! I like meeting the girls like me!”



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