

Autism Spectrum Disorder in Elementary Schools

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Autism Spectrum Disorder

Diagnostic and Statistic Manual- Fifth Edition (DSM-V) defines the two domains that individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) demonstrate deficits.

1. Persistent social communication and social interaction difficulties: social-emotional reciprocity, nonverbal communication behaviors, developing and maintaining relationships
2. Restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior: stereotyped repetitive motor movement, fixated interests, hyper reactivity to sensory input, insistence on sameness.

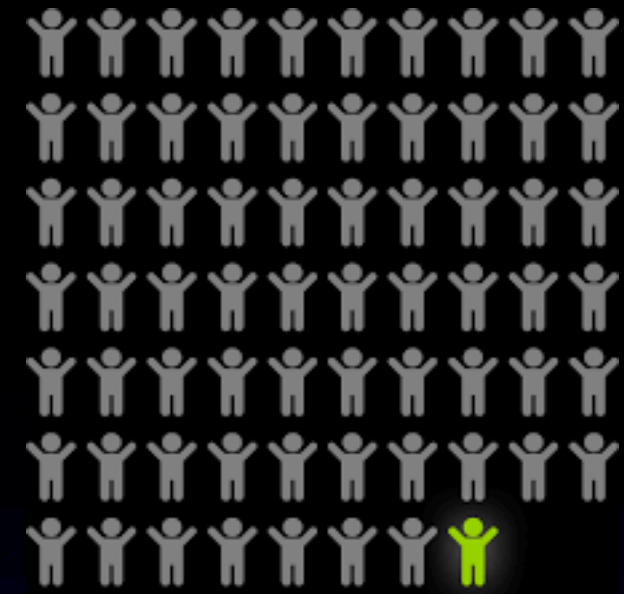
Autism Spectrum Disorder encompasses Autism, Aspergers, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Problem Statement

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have unique behavioral, social, and academic needs. It is important for school professionals to have an understanding of ASD because every teacher will have a student with ASD in his or her classroom. School staff must be knowledgeable of behavioral strategies for students with ASD so that they can be successful in the classroom.

Statistics



- In the United States, autism occurs in 1 of 68 births
- Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability with an increase of 6-15% each year from 2002 to 2010
- Autism affects 1 in 42 boys and 1 in 189 girls
- Autism occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups
- Parents who have a child with autism have a 2-18% chance of having a second child with autism

Characteristics

- Approximately 44% of children with autism have average to above average intellectual ability
- 83% of children with autism have other developmental, neurological, psychiatric, or genetic diagnosis
- Autism can be diagnosed as early as 2 years of age

Implications for Teachers and School

Teachers can implement the following elements to help students with ASD:

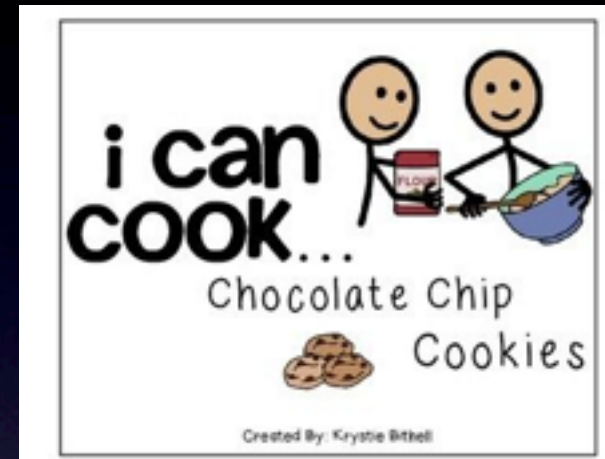
- Visual Supports
 - Social Stories
 - Environment
 - Routines

Visual Supports



Pictures

Pictures can be used to support routines and activities. This is an example of a visual schedule.



Text

Text can be used to support routines and activities as well. It can also be used to support literacy and language development.



Video Modeling

Video modeling is used to target specific skills and demonstrates the skill in a practical/functional setting. Students watch and rewatch the video until the skill is learned. Banda, Matuszny, and and Turkan (2007) describe the benefits of video modeling in an inclusive setting in that teachers can use this strategy with students with ASD as well as with those who display similar skill deficits.

Social Stories

Social Stories can be used for students with ASD to target social skills deficits. The teacher and the student create a story about the social skill including a factual description of the the behavior, a perspective sentence, a directive sentence of the appropriate behavior, and an affirmative sentence about the importance of the behavior. Social Stories could also be drawings.

Hart and Whalon (2011) state that social gains are maximized when children with ASD receive social skill instruction in a natural setting with their peers. An inclusive setting provides this context for students with ASD. Thompson and Johnston (2013) conclude the social stories are an effective way to teach desirable behavior. In their study, the participating classroom teacher notes that they are easy to implement and was worth the time and effort.



Social Stories can be read or viewed independently by the student at the beginning of the school day or before any activity where the desired behavior is needed.

Environment



Over-cluttered environments produce distraction and sensory overload. Students with autism need calming environments with space to work in addition to a “calm-down” area or space they can take a break if needed. Teachers can designate these areas in any classroom and inform the students that their purposes.

Routines

To alleviate some of the stress and anxiety for students with ASD, teachers can:

- Set consistent routines of the day/week/month's events
- Inform students ahead of time of transitions
- Set clear expectations for behavior, have these posted as reminders
 - Allow time for free choice. This can serve as motivation for the students. Have desirable activities available for free time.



Summary

Students with autism will be sitting in every classroom. As a result, teachers and school professionals must be knowledgeable and prepared. Four elements teachers can use in their classrooms for students with autism include visual supports, social stories, environmental modifications, and routines. The goal for all students is that they will learn the skills they need to be successful. These elements target behavior and social skills so that students with autism can be successful.

Additional Resources

Journal Articles

Banda, D. R., Matuszny, R. M., & Turkan, S. (2007). Video modeling strategies to enhance appropriate behaviors in children with autism spectrum disorders. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 39(6), 47-52. doi:10.1177/004005990703900607

Hart, J. E., & Whalon, K. J. (2011). Creating social opportunities for students with autism spectrum disorder in inclusive settings. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 46(5), 273-279. doi:10.1177/1053451210395382

Thompson, R. M., & Johnston, S. (2013). Use of social stories to improve self-regulation in children with autism spectrum disorders. *Physical & Occupational Therapy In Pediatrics*, 33(3), 271-284. doi:10.3109/01942638.2013.768322

Websites

[Autism-Help](#)

[Center for Disease Control](#)

[National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke](#)

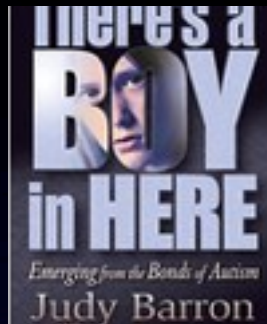
National Organizations

[Autism Society](#) (800) 328-8476

[Autism Speaks](#) (888) 288-4762

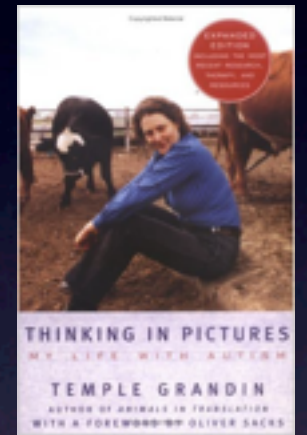
[Autism Society of Michigan](#) (517)882-2800

Additional Resources



Barron, J., & Barron, S. (1992). *There's a boy in here*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Grandin, T. (2006). *Thinking in pictures: And other reports from my life with autism*. Vintage.



Notbohm, E. (2005). *Ten things every child with autism wishes you knew*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.