

# Classroom Strategies for Supporting Students with ASD

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UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH FLORIDA

## Best Practices:

**National Autism Center**

**National Standards Project**

<http://www.nationalautismcenter.org/affiliates/>

# Taking Care of A Little Business

Questions  
Lottery

# Advanced Organizer

- ASD Overview
- Classroom Strategies
- Teaching Social Skills
- Top 10 Tips for Educators/School Personnel



# Prevalence of ASD

- It is estimated that 1 out of 91 children has an autism spectrum disorder (Am Assoc of Peds, 2009)
  - Broader DSM definition
  - Increased awareness among clinicians
  - Diagnostic substitution: Increase in ASD with decrease in MR
  - Autism recognized in IDEA in 1991
- Higher incidence in male population (4:1)

# What is ASD?

- Autism Spectrum Disorder is an “umbrella” term for:
  - Autism
  - Asperger’s Disorder
  - Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (NOS)
- Currently there is no known cause nor “cure”

# What is Autism?

Autism Speaks Video Glossary:  
<http://www.autismspeaks.org>

# Communication/Language Deficits

- Delay or lack of spoken language
  - Uses alternative means to communicate:
    - *Tantrum behavior*: screaming, crying
    - *Physical means*: pulling another person towards item, grabbing, aggression
    - *"Video talk"* – uses scripts from movies, music, plays to "fit" the scenario
- Poor comprehension of language
- Conversational language problems
  - Spontaneous initiation of interaction
  - Initiating and sustaining a conversation with others

# Social Behavior Deficits

- **Peer relationships**
  - Failure to develop “meaningful” relationships with others
  - Interactions may be limited to “fulfilling needs”
- **“Theory of Mind”**: Thinking about how others think
  - Understanding that others’ have beliefs, knowledge, intentions, desires, feelings that may differ from your own
- **Joint attention**
  - The use of eye contact and gestures to coordinate or *share attention about enjoyable experiences* with a social partner about an interesting object or event

# Restricted Range of Interests & Activities

- Stereotyped Motor Mannerisms
- Preoccupation with parts of objects
- Insistence on Sameness
  - Strong Reactions to Changes
  - Nonfunctional Routines/Rituals
- Preoccupation with an interest that is abnormal in intensity or focus

# Play Skill Deficits

- Preference for “non-toy” items
- Use toys in unusual ways
- Prefer to play alone
- Play alongside other children, rather than with them
- When playing with others, the child may insist on “directing” the play
- Child may become angry / upset if others deviate from the “script”
- Prefer to play with the same (few) toys
- Plays with toys the same way / no variation or imagination
- Little or no pretend play

# Subtle Differences

- Individuals with Asperger's typically have better language, BUT this does not mean they are better communicators
- Individuals with Asperger's must not have experienced language delays and typically are average to above average cognitively
- Age of diagnosis tends to be later in individuals with Asperger's

National Autistic Society (2007). <http://www.nas.org.uk/>



# The Typical Student with Autism: IS...Atypical

## DOMAIN

## RANGE OF ABILITIES

Social

Aloof → Passive → Active/Odd

Communication

Nonverbal → Verbal

Cognitive

ID → Above Average/Gifted

Motor

Clumsy → Coordinated

Sensory

Hypo → Hypersensitive

(adapted from ISDD-IRCA 1992)

**Know thy student!**

**First...**

Every  
Student is  
Different!

# What a diagnosis doesn't tell you!

- Strengths, weaknesses, likes & dislikes
- Academic capability
- Communication skills
- Existence of challenging behaviors
- Why challenging behaviors occur
- Family information and interactions
- How to teach a new skill to the child
- What supports the child needs

# Possible Educational Classifications

- ADHD
- Autism
- Other Health Impaired
- Learning Disabled
- Behavioral or Emotional Disturbance
- Pragmatic Language Disordered
- Developmentally Disabled Pre-K
- Speech and Language Impaired
- Multiply Handicapped
- NONE!



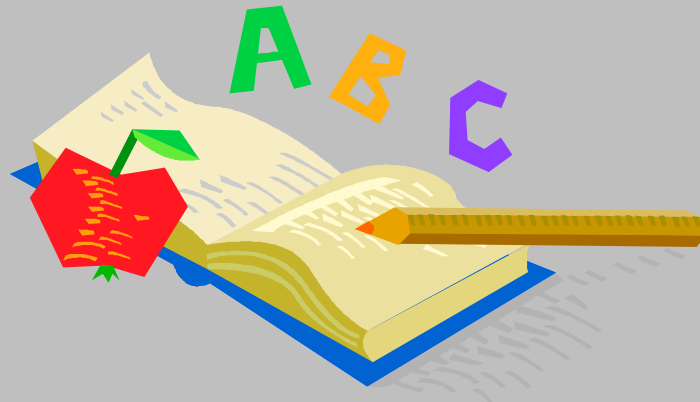
Countryman, J. (2008). Social Skills Groups for Asperger's Disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. *Psychiatry*, 5, 42-47.



# Specific Situations

## Problem

- Trouble with reading comprehension



- difficulty with math concepts & processes

## Strategy

- provide vocabulary list
  - read summary first
  - highlight important points
  - colored overlay
  - graphic organizer
- 
- use manipulatives
  - use calculator
  - use chart with facts
  - highlight key words

# Specific Situations

## Problem

- fine motor problems



- difficulty with the writing process

## Strategy

- allow use of computer
- grade mechanics and content separately
- consult with OT
- AlphaSmart or assistive tech
  - \**hint: be wary of organization!*
- require an outline prior to writing
- provide prompts for planning
- teach recipe
- use special interest



# Specific Situations

## Problem

- difficulty completing assignments



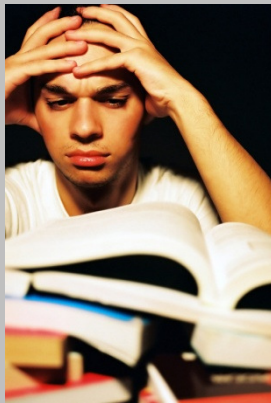
## Strategy

- reduce total amount of work BUT select tasks that are needed to accomplish objectives
- use of visual timer to define work times
- assign easier tasks first
- consider colored overlay for improving reading speed

# Specific Situations

## Problem

- Not motivated



- Dealing with anxiety

## Strategy

- use special interest or talent
- token strip/contract
  - \*hint: be wary of response-cost!
- make a toolbox
- provide breaks
- self-calming statements
- “Chill out” space

# Specific Situations

## Problem

- short attention span
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- behavior problems

## Strategy

- proximity control
- token strip
- file folder carrel
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Use choice
- use routines/post schedule
- differential reinforcement
- “chill out” space
- token strip

# Specific Situations

## Problem

- The lunchroom is “sensory overload”
- Sensory difficulties



## Strategy

- “Lunch Bunch” or “Circle of Friends” in the library
- start each activity with a brief motor movement break
- chill out space/break
- allow sensory materials during activities when possible
- consult with OT

# Specific Situations

## Problem

- Navigating day/class



- Dealing with bullies

## Strategy

- schedule posted in each class (visual)
- define bullying
- "Circle of Friends"
- leaving for the locker early
- Playground Pass system

# Specific Situations

## Problem

- Difficulty regulating emotions



- Blurting out

## Strategy

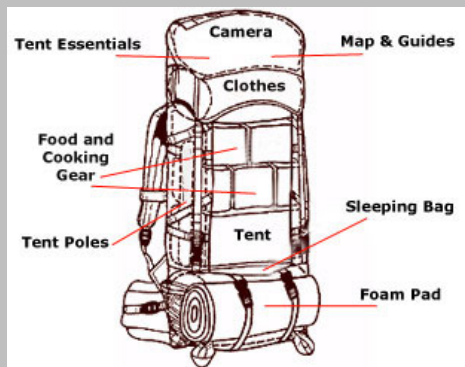
- reflective listening
- chill out space

- talk tickets
- journal for questions/comments

# Specific Situations

## Problem

- Organization



- Following Directions

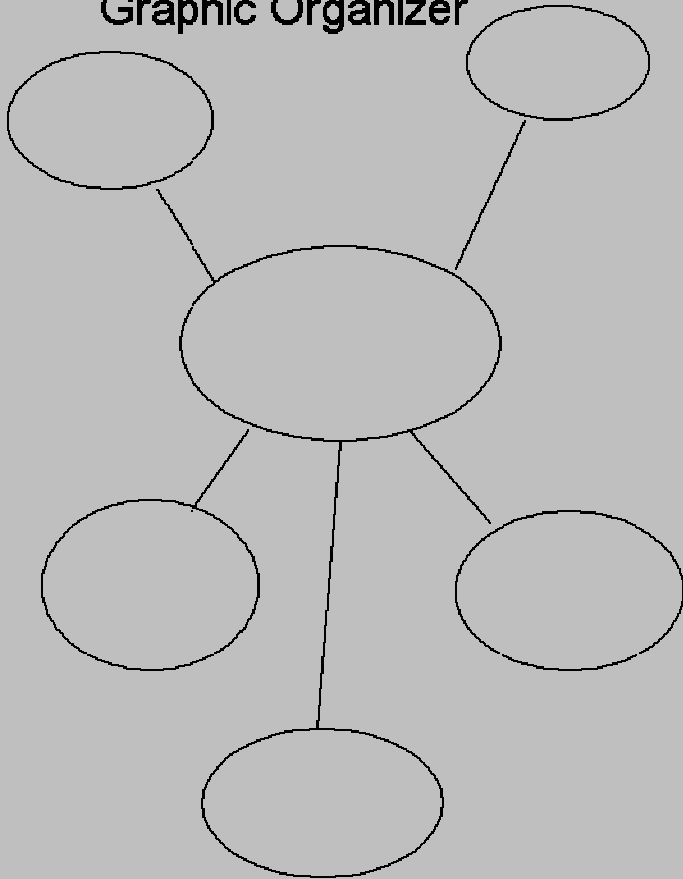
## Strategy

- color code subjects with folders
- backpack checklist
- diagram in desk

- double check directions/post on board
- oral directions to written directions w/pics

# Extra Tips

Graphic Organizer



- Provide **visuals** with assignments!
- Provide **manipulatives** with assignments!
- Provide **examples** with assignments!

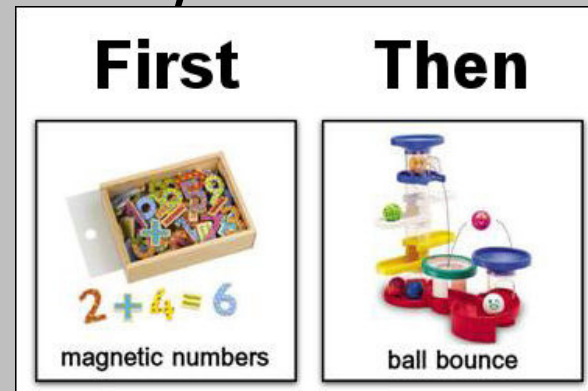


# Visual Supports

## ■ Task Analysis Strips



## • First, Then Board



## • Choice Board



**More tips and tricks with  
presentation...**

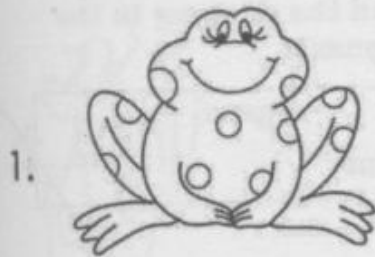
**Alex struggled with motivation,  
writing, and reading.**

**He also *loves* superheroes!**

[Pivotal Response Treatments for Autism](#)  
by Koegel & Koegel (2006)

## Beginning Sounds

Name the key picture.  
Which word starts with the same sound?  
Put an X in the right box.



frog

fan

fruit

foot



snowman

snake

shoes

sheep



train

table

toe

tree



chair

cat

cherry

cap



gloves

gum

glass

green



flower

flag

fire

fish

NAME Alex Nickels ZORRO

## CHAPTER 6 How Your Body Works

### VOCABULARY

Use with Sections 3 and 4, pages 60 - 72

#### Skill: Recognizing Vocabulary Words

Read the clues found in the ACROSS and DOWN lists. Find the answers in the term box below and use them to complete the crossword puzzle.

cells	cartilage	joint	ligaments	marrow	organs
pelvis	skeleton	tissues	vertebrae	body systems	

#### ACROSS

- 4. organs
- 9. vertebrae
- 10. joint
- 11. ligaments

#### DOWN

- 1. cell
- 2. body system
- 3. tissues
- 5. cartilage
- 6. skeleton
- 7. pelvis
- 8. marrow

1. joint  
a. two bones connect  
b. hip and bone

2. marrow  
a. eyes and nose  
b. tissue in bone




3. skeleton  
a. toes and fingers  
b. body framework

4. cell  
a. smallest part  
b. hair

vocabulary practice 34

NAME Alex

100

Add.  +  +  = 6

$$\begin{array}{r} 3 \rangle 5 \\ 2 \rangle \\ + 5 \text{ ||||} \\ \hline 10 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 2 \rangle 4 \\ 2 \rangle \\ + 5 \text{ ||||} \\ \hline 9 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 3 \rangle 4 \\ 1 \rangle \\ + 2 \text{ ||} \\ \hline 6 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 3 \rangle 7 \\ 4 \rangle \\ + 2 \text{ ||} \\ \hline 9 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 2 \rangle 5 \\ 3 \rangle \\ + 5 \text{ ||||} \\ \hline 10 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 4 \rangle 6 \\ 2 \rangle \\ + 2 \text{ ||} \\ \hline 8 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 4 \rangle 7 \\ 3 \rangle \\ + 3 \text{ ||} \\ \hline 10 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 2 \rangle 3 \\ 1 \rangle \\ + 4 \text{ ||||} \\ \hline 7 \end{array}$$

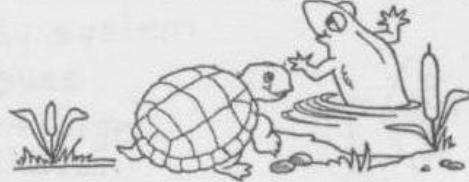
$$\begin{array}{r} 3 \rangle 8 \\ 5 \rangle \\ + 1 \text{ |} \\ \hline 9 \end{array}$$

# CHAPTER 7

## PLANTS

### Section 7-1. Plants & Animals Help Each Other

Plants and animals share a relationship called the oxygen-carbon dioxide cycle. Animals breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. Green plants take in the carbon dioxide. As the plants produce food, they give off oxygen. The steps of this cycle are listed below. The words of each step have been scrambled. Put the words in the correct order.



1. ~~in~~ oxygen animals breathe a b i o  
animals breathe in oxygen \_\_\_\_\_
2. breathe out dioxide carbon animals a b o d e d  
animals breathe out carbon dioxide \_\_\_\_\_
3. carbon dioxide in plants take r t i e d  
plants take carbon dioxide \_\_\_\_\_
4. make food plants r m f  
\_\_\_\_\_ plants make food \_\_\_\_\_
5. off-oxygen plants give r g off o  
\_\_\_\_\_ plants give off oxygen \_\_\_\_\_

Name Alex Hickels 2011

### Chapter 4 – Masculine and Feminine Pronouns

Read the sentences below and choose from the pronouns in the box to fill the blank with the correct masculine or feminine pronoun.

he her herself she himself his

Masculine

he  
his  
himself



Feminine

she  
her  
herself

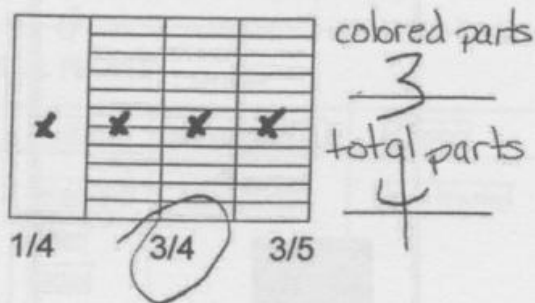
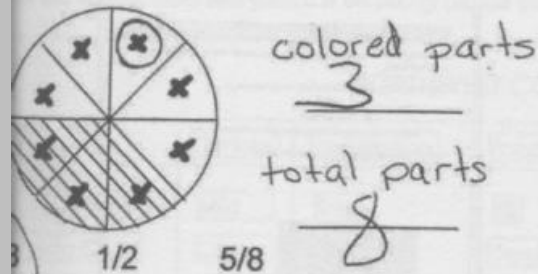
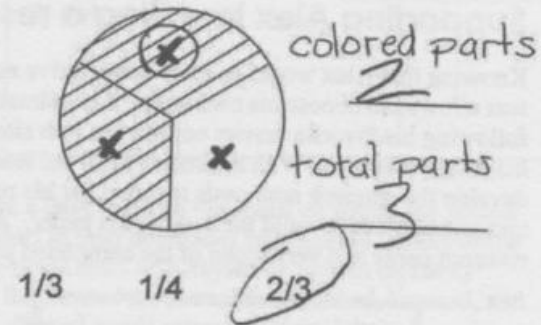
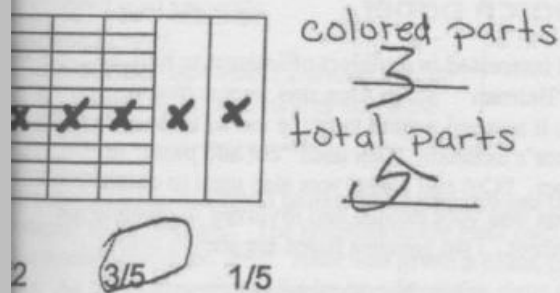
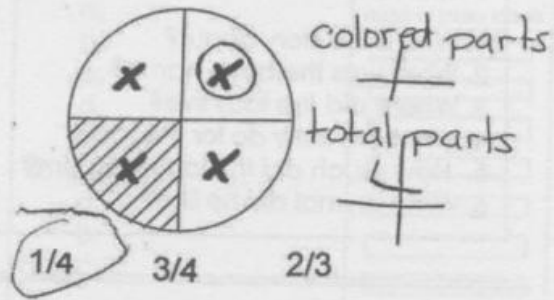
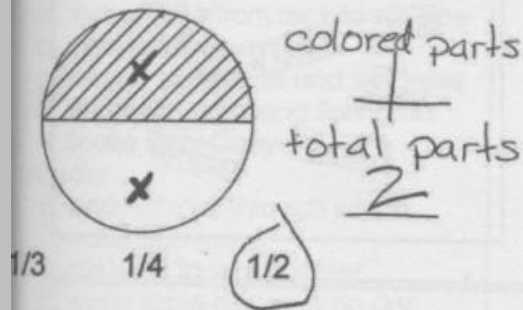
1. Lee studies math because he wants to become a scientist.
2. Karen lent her his bicycle to Mike.
3. M Bill found herself himself amazed by how easy cooking really was.
4. M Mr. Chang washed her his hands after working in the garden.
5. When Melissa was younger, F she he loved reading mysteries.
6. F Rebecca called himself herself Becky, but her mother wouldn't.



Name Alex Nickels Batman

## section 10 - learning about fractions

Directions: Circle the fraction that correctly represents the object.



**TEACH SOCIAL SKILLS!**

# Methods of Teaching

- Direct Instruction
- Incidental Teaching
- Social Autopsy
- Peer Mentoring
- Video feedback
- Social Stories
- Comic Book Conversations
- Power Cards
- Hidden Curriculum
- VIDEO MODELING

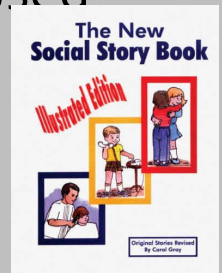


# Methods of Instruction: Social Stories & Comic Strip Conversations

## Four Types of Sentences Used:

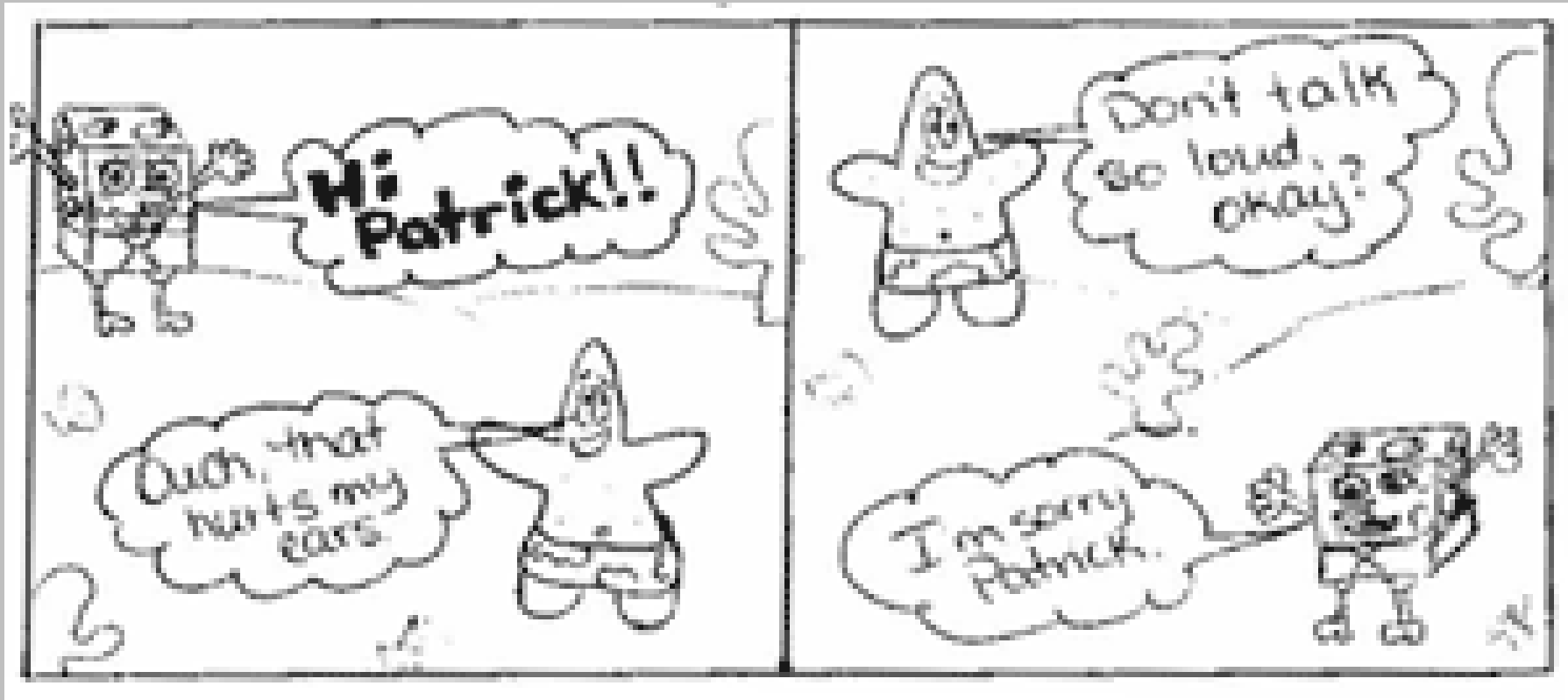
- **Descriptive sentences** objectively address the “wh” questions: *where* the situation takes place, *who* is involved, *what* they are doing, and *why* they may be doing it.
- **Perspective sentences** give a peek into the minds of those involved in the story; they provide details about the emotions and thoughts of others.
- **Directive sentences** suggest desired responses tailored to the individual.
- **Control sentences** are authored by the student himself as something of a mnemonic device -- a sentence to help him remember the story or deal with the situation. These are not used in every story and are typically used only with fairly high functioning children.

<http://www.polyxo.com/socialstories/introduction.html>



# Sample Social Story

# Methods of Instruction: Comic Strip Conversations



<http://www.autismspectrum.ilstu.edu/resources/factsheets/comicstrip.shtml>

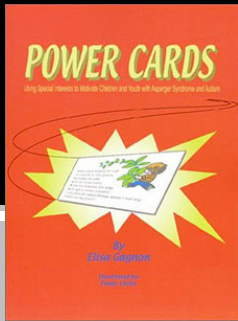


*I don't have to hug people  
anymore to say hello.  
Now I can give HIGH FIVES!  
That will make everyone feel  
comfortable.*



[www.toondoo.com](http://www.toondoo.com)

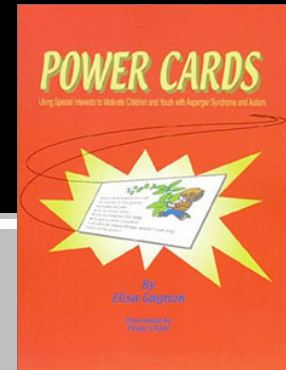




## Methods of Instruction: Power Cards

- Capitalizes on the child's special interests
- Short scenario with the child's hero who solves their problem
  - The first paragraph the hero attempts to solve the problem
  - The second paragraph encourages the student to try to solve the problem like the hero

# Methods of Instruction: Power Cards



## ■ The Card:

- Use the hero "Regis wants you to remember these steps..."
- Just a few steps to remember in order to complete the skill
  1. Look at the person's eyes when you greet them
  2. Say "Hi"
  3. Extend your right hand to shake their right hand
  4. Use an up-and-down motion
  5. Count to four in your head when shaking their hand and then let go.

## ***Shania Twain Greet Her Fans***

***by Kitty Flinn***

*Shania Twain meets hundreds of people each year. After her concerts, she spends time with her fans, greeting them and autographing pictures. She used to hug all the people she met and then realized that this is not the only way, or the best way, to greet somebody she is meeting for the first time. Some people do not like to be hugged, especially by someone they are meeting for the first time. Just like Shania, it is important for everybody to learn to greet appropriately.*

- 1. Smile and put out your right hand and shake the other person's right hand.*
- 2. Introduce yourself and ask the person how they are.*
- 3. Practice greetings with your friends and teachers.*



# The “Hidden” Curriculum

- Set of rules or guidelines that are often not directly taught, but are assumed to be known
- Differences in the Hidden Curriculum:
  - Age - what is appropriate at age 9 is different than at age 15
  - Gender - girls and boys often have different topics of conversation
  - Location - behavior in the lunchroom is different than behavior in the principals office
  - Culture - social expectations differ in countries and even regions within a country

# Opportunities for Teaching

## ■ Bathroom

- Always close the door
- Pull your pants up before leaving the stall
- Don't talk to the person next to you (boys)
- Boys don't need to take their pants off when using a urinal
- Don't talk about what you did in the bathroom

## ■ Clothing

- Adjust clothing in the bathroom
- Don't take clothes off in public (even if you're hot)
- Sit with your legs closed, especially if you are wearing a skirt
- Boys don't wear pink underwear

# Opportunities for Teaching

## ■ Eating

- Chew with your mouth closed
- Don't take eat someone's food without asking
- Keep food in your mouth at all times (don't take it out to look at it)
- Use your utensils when you eat
- Never touch food in line with your hands

## ■ Friendship

- It is probably not a good idea to ask the same person to play everyday
- Friends say nice things to each other
- Friends forgive each other for mistakes
- If someone is nice to you, it doesn't mean they are your friend
- It is ok if your friends has other friends or interests

## Methods of Instruction: Role Playing

- Can be scripted or spontaneous
- Can role play both a positive example and a negative example
- Gives child a chance to practice
- Gives you a chance to prompt
- Should be able to “act out” the skill several times without prompting before considered fluent

## Methods of Instruction: **Video Modeling**

- Child watching videos of themselves, adults, or other peers engaging in the targeted behavior
  - Self-modeling may be more effective
- Works best with children who can attend for at least several minutes without engaging in challenging behaviors



# Social Skills Lottery

- Do a preference assessment for treats and create your “Social Skills Treasure Box”
  - Ideas...
    - Fun Size Candy Bars
    - Computer Passes
    - Pencils
    - Erasers
    - Temporary Tattoos
    - Bouncy Balls
    - Stickers
    - \$ store toys
- Tell the child that you’re going to be “on the lookout” for good social skills
- Tell them they CANNOT tell you when a social skill has been used

# Social Skills Lottery

- Give each child their own color and give them several slips of that color paper to keep at their desk
- Every time they use their social skill, they get to put a piece of paper in the lottery
  - Have them write the skill on the paper for data collection or you can write for them
- Explain that the more appropriately they behave, the better their chances of getting called in the lottery

# Top 10 Tips for Educators



# #1: Work as a Team!

- Work to maintain structure and consistent routines.
  - Substitutes
  - Fire drills
  - Assemblies
  - Field trips
  - Visitation days
  - Indoor recess
  - Early dismissals

# #1: Work as a Team!

- When challenging behaviors occur, as a **TEAM** ask why?
  - Are your expectations clear?
  - Are your demands realistic?
  - Is the environment appropriately structured?
  - Do you have strategies in place to increase predictability, especially for transitions?

# #1: Work as a Team!

- Students with Autism could have many team members... use them all!
  - Parents
  - ESE Specialist
  - Area Support
  - District ASD Support
  - Occupational Therapist
  - Speech Therapist
  - Physical Therapist

# #2: Communication

- Slow down
- Less language is better! Be brief
- Be concrete and specific in requests
- Get attention before giving directions
- Check for understanding and ask several different ways
- Train on nonverbal communication
- Train on beginning, ending, and maintaining conversations
- Give time constraints when possible

# #3: Prompting

- Evaluate the success of your prompting (take data!) & gradually fade
  - **Gestural**
    - Pointing to where the student needs to go
    - Placing your finger in front of your mouth to signal “Quiet”
    - Pointing to direct attention
  - **Verbal**
    - Reminders: “Don’t forget to write your name on your paper”
    - Echoic: Repeat after me “I pledge allegiance..”
    - Hints: “It starts with a B.”
  - **Visual**
    - Putting the schedule on the desk
    - Visual Timer



# #4: Structure



- Organized environment with clear boundaries
- Minimized distractions
- Consistent classroom management

# #5: Be a behavioral detective!

- Look at challenging behaviors as communication
- Find the motivators and the function served!!!



# #6: Teach Social Skills!

- Embedding social skills instruction throughout...
  - Help to give perspective on the thoughts, emotions, & behaviors of others
  - Help predict the actions of others
  - Think about utilizing:
    - Role Playing
    - Video Modeling

# #7: Parents as Partners



- Parents know their child the best!
- Their concerns & perspectives should help to shape educational planning
- The more they are involved and their needs considered, the more invested they will be

# #8: Be the best you can be!

- Important to...
  - Be flexible
  - Be aware
  - Be open
  - Be willing to change
  - Be conscious of what's working & what isn't



# #9: Utilize your resources

- Area Personnel
- District ASD Team
- CARD
- Online Resources
- Parents!



# #10: Recipe for Success



Our students need a combination of understanding  
and good classroom practice.  
**You already have exactly what it takes to teach  
them!**

**Questions?**



# Suggested Readings: Learning More about ASD

- Frith, U. (1991). *Autism and Asperger Syndrome*. Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge Press University.
- Haddon, M. (2003). *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*. Doubleday.
- Myles, B.S. & Adreon, D. (2001). *Asperger Syndrome and Adolescence: Practical Solutions for Schools Success*. Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC.
- Myles, B.S. & Simpson, R.L. (1998). *Asperger Syndrome: A Guide for Educators and Parents*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.
- Myles, B.W. & Southwick, J. (1998). *Asperger Syndrome & Difficult Moments: Practical Solutions for Tantrums, Rage, and Meltdowns*. Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC.
- Sacks, O. (1995). *An Anthropologist on Mars*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Williams, K. (1995). *Understanding the Student with Asperger Syndrome: Guidelines for Teachers*. *Focus on Autistic Behavior*, 10, 9-16.

# Suggested Readings: Learning More about Inclusion

- Kluth, P. & Schwarz, P. (2008). *Just Give Him the Whale!: 20 Ways to Use Fascinations, Areas of Expertise, and Strengths to Support Students with Autism*
- Kluth, P. (2003) *You're Going to Love this Kid!: Teaching Students with Autism in the Inclusive Classroom*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Schwarz, P. (2006) *From Disability to Possibility*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Schwarz, P. & Kluth, P. (2007) *You're Welcome: 30 Innovative Ideas for the Inclusive Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Udvari-Solner, A. & Kluth, P. (2008). *Joyful Learning: Active and Collaborative Learning in Inclusive Classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Wagner, S. (2002). *Inclusive Programming for Middle School Students with Autism/Asperger's Syndrome*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.

# Suggested Readings: Teaching Social Skills

Attwood, T. (2004). *Exploring Feelings: cognitive behavior therapy to manage ANGER*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.

Dunn, M. (2006). *Social skills in our schools*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

Dunn Buron, K. (2007). *A "5" could make me lose control!* Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

Garcia Winner, Michelle. (2007). *Thinking about you, thinking about me* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Jose, CA: Think Social Publishing.

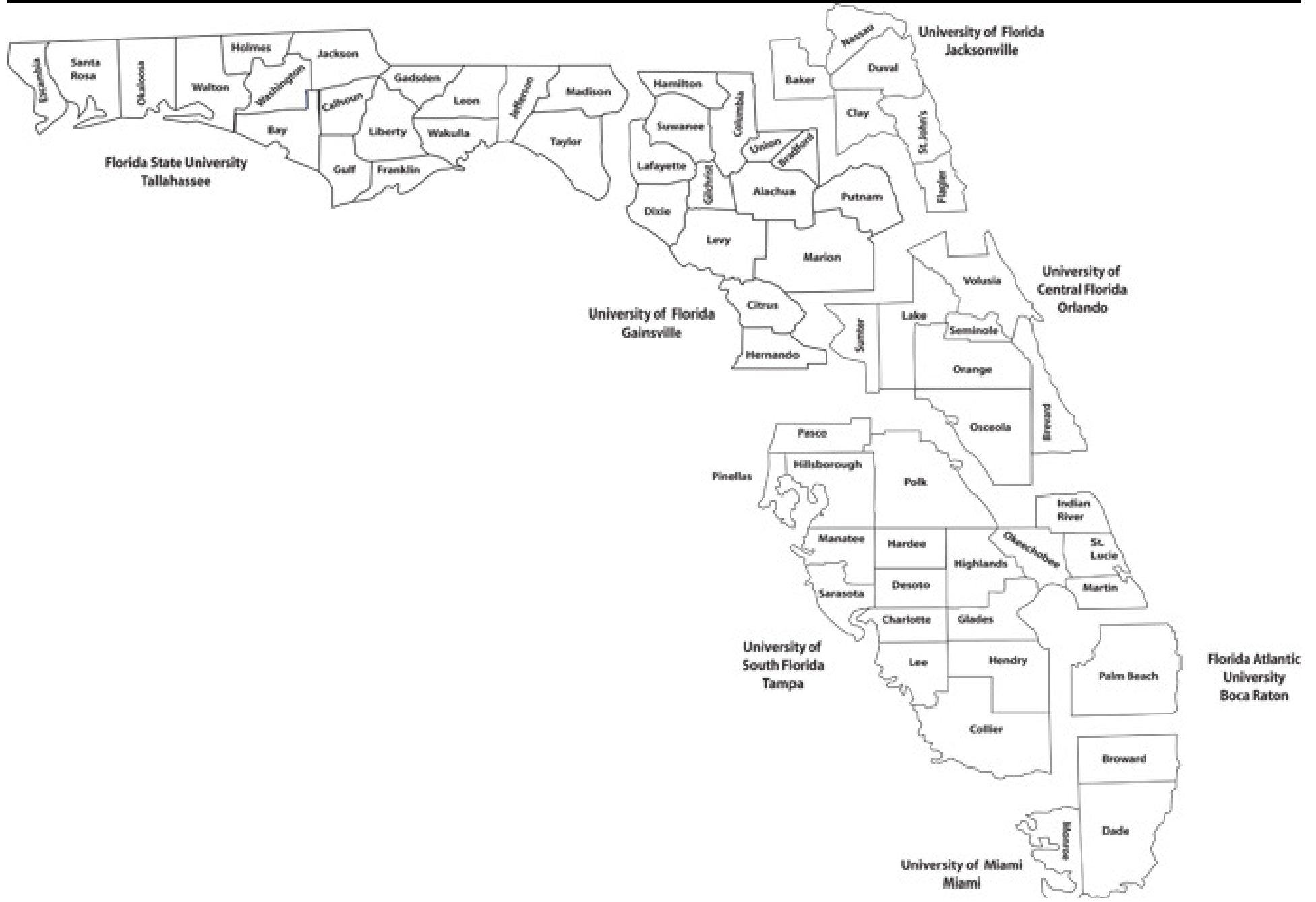
Goodsen-Schroeder, D.E. & Hansen, S.F. (2004). *Pathways for social reasoning & problem solving*. Chesterfield, MO: Language Pathways, Inc.

McAfee, J. (2002). *Navigating the social world*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.

# Other Resources

- Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support (OASIS)  
<http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/>
- Organization for Autism Research Guide for Educators  
<http://www.researchautism.org/resources/reading/index.asp>
- MAAP Services for Autism & Asperger Syndrome  
<http://www.maapservices.org/>
- Center for Effective Collaboration & Practice  
<http://cecp.air.org/>
- Florida Inclusion Network  
<http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/page272.aspx>

# Thank you! Center for Autism & Related Disabilities



# Thank you!!

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