

AUTISM

A Personal History
and
A Professional Challenge

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What is AUTISM ?

- Complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life.
- Impacts areas of social interaction and communication skills.
- Difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interaction and leisure and play activities.

AUTISM is a
SPECTRUM DISORDER

This means that
NO TWO STUDENTS
with autism will be the
same.

AUTISM

**CHANGES
EVERYTHING**

**Autism incidence has
increased
dramatically**

**AUTISM now impacts
1 in 68 individuals**

ADDITIONAL AUTISM STATISTICS

- One of the fastest growing developmental disabilities 10-17% annual growth
- \$126 billion annual cost (Newsweek 5/7/12)
(\$96 billion annual cost in 2006)
- 90% of costs are in adult services
- Cost of lifelong care can be reduced by 2/3 with early diagnosis and intervention
- In 10 years, the annual cost will be \$200-400 billion

AUTSIM STATISTICS—AUTISM SOCIETY OF AMERICA
2003, 2006

What do you know?

- Where have your impressions about kids with Autism come from?

Films?

Books or Articles?

Coursework?

Personal experience?

How do you feel about working with a student with **Autism**?

- This was most definitely NOT in the game plan!
- I have no idea where to begin!
- What do I need to know?

STUDENTS WITH AUTISM HAVE CHALLENGES IN THESE AREAS

- Communication and Social interaction
- Organizational Skills
- Sensory overload
- Abstract and conceptual thinking
- Change of routine and activity transitions

STUDENTS WITH AUTISM HAVE CHALLENGES IN THESE AREAS

- Maintaining attention on topics not of interest to the student
- Dealing with assignments that have multiple components and understanding long, complex instructions
- Processing large amounts of verbal information
- Reading comprehension

STUDENTS WITH AUTISM HAVE CHALLENGES IN THESE AREAS

- Sequence of events
- Learning generalizations of concepts
- Knowing what concepts in a lesson are most important
- Frustration because of an intense desire for “perfection”
- Activities that require fine motor skills

Students with Autism also have Great Strengths

- Excellent Memories
- Spelling
- Learning and using new or sophisticated words
- Visual thinking
- Extensive knowledge about topics of interest

Strengths come with the **CHALLENGE**

How do we *HARNESS* the
STRENGTHS

and use them to
OVERCOME
the academic and social hurdles?

Adapting Strengths

- Identify the areas where the student has ability—build on it!
- Incorporate interests into school-related activities
- Students with autism recognize order
- Good rapport with adults
- Good followers of rules and instructions—keep in mind, that for some students these need to be very specific and literal in nature.
- Success will build the child's self-esteem and will help them to adapt to the "real world" more completely and quickly

Effective Educational Practices

- Individualized supports and services for students and families
- Systematic and Specialized curriculum content
- Comprehensible / Structured environment
- Functional approach to problem behaviors
- **Get information from previous teachers**
- **Family involvement**

Strategies for Success

- Emphasize essential material and content with concrete examples and specific instructions
- Highlight most important concepts (3-5 instead of 10)
- Alternate modes for completion of assignments (break the assignment into smaller parts, computer work vs. hand written work, etc.)

Strategies for Success

- Prepare the student for change in routine or subject matter.
- Provide an outline of material to be covered
- ASD students are visual thinkers so anything visual that may be used as a support is beneficial.

Strategies for Success

- Flash cards with important terms and concepts are an effective tool.
- Try different modes of assessment
- Allow for additional completion time
- Work toward discovering the key to keeping the ASD student “on task”
- Be patient—keep trying!!

Utilize Computers with ASD students

Many students with ASD love working with the computer—use this technology as a motivator.

New research is showing significant promise in the area of virtual reality and social skills training for people with ASD.

ENCOURAGE INTERACTION WITH “REGULAR” STUDENTS AS FREQUENTLY AS POSSIBLE

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT STUDENTS WITH ASD WILL MAKE **SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL GAINS** WHEN PLACED IN SITUATIONS WHERE THEY NEED TO INTERACT WITH REGULAR STUDENTS

ASD students **restricted** to groups of students that were autistic or developmentally delayed **did not** make gains in social interaction.

TALK TALK TALK

TALK WITH THE STUDENT'S PARENTS
TO LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ABOUT THE STUDENT'S:

INTERESTS

AREAS OF STRENGTHS

QUIRKS

FEARS

ABILITIES

Success is **TEAM** Dependant

PARENTS

TEACHERS

THERAPISTS

ADMINISTRATORS

These people need to be involved in **REGULAR** communication about the progress and needs of the student so that **ALL** are working toward common goals and are utilizing common interventions.

GOING BEYOND THE IEP

Students with ASD, in many ways, require us to "GO BEYOND" the IEP and see success for these kids as a team / group effort.

No part of the team (Parents, Teachers, Therapists, Administration) can be left out of the picture.

ALL MUST WORK TOGETHER

PARENTS

**Remember, you are
your child's
BEST ADVOCATE!**

Teachers have **significant impact** on how peers relate with the student who has **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

Research has shown that how teachers relate to and deal with the student who has ASD—significantly impacts how that student is interacted with and viewed by peers.

Focus on Achievement

Parents and many students with ASD are painfully aware of the areas of where students struggle.

When talking with parents or with students--*focus on areas of success* and areas where potential success is possible.

Students with ASD need someone who will help them develop an interest or talent area into a potential career.

Adult or student mentors can be especially effective in helping to do this.

ESSENTIAL READING

- EMERGENCE: Labeled Autistic
Temple Grandin and Margaret Scariano, 1986
- THINKING IN PICTURES and other reports from my life with autism
Temple Grandin, 1995

ESSENTIAL READING

(Continued)

- *A Parent's Guide to Asperger Syndrome and High-Functioning AUTISM: How to meet the challenges and help your child thrive.* Sally Ozonoff, PhD; Geraldine Dawson, PhD; James McPartland, 2002
- *INCLUSION STRATEGIES THAT WORK! Research Based Methods in the Classroom*—Toby J. Karten 2005

ESSENTIAL READING

(Continued)

- *UNWRITTEN RULES OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: Decoding Social Mysteries Through the Unique Perspectives of Autism,*
Dr. Temple Grandin and Sean Barron, Future Horizons, 2005
- *Autism Spectrum Disorders: The Complete Guide to Understanding Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, and Other ASDs-* Chantal Sicile-Kira, Penguin Group, 2004

ESSENTIAL READING

(Continued)

Adolescents on the Autism Spectrum: A Parent's Guide to the Cognitive, Social, Physical, and Transition Needs of Teenagers with Autism Spectrum Disorders by Chantal Sicile-Kira, Penguin 2006

Send in the Idiots : Stories from the Other Side of Autism by Kamran Nazeer, Bloomsbury, USA
2006

ESSENTIAL READING

(Continued)

**Realizing the College Dream with
Autism or Ausperger Syndrome: A
Parent's Guide to Student Success** by
Ann Palmer, Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2006

**The Way I See It: A Personal Look
at Autism and Asperger's** by Temple
Grandin, Ph. D. , Future Horizons 2008