



AUTISM NEWS

of Orange County
& the Rest of the World

Winter/Spring 2007

Volume 3, Issue 3



Cover illustration by David Davis

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COVER FEATURE

We are pleased to feature one of our local artists, **David Davis**. Read more about David on page 22.

Mission Statement

Autism News of Orange County & the Rest of the World is a collaborative publication for parents and professionals dedicated to sharing research-based strategies, innovative educational approaches, best practices and experiences in the area of autism.

Submission Policy

The Autism News of Orange County *RW* is available free of charge to parents and professionals of children with autism. The opinions expressed in the newsletter do not necessarily represent the official view of the agencies involved.

Contributions from teachers, therapists, researchers and relatives/children of/with autism are welcome. The editors select articles and make necessary changes.

Please submit articles in Microsoft Word using font size 12, double spaced, and no more than four pages in length (2600 words). Photos are encouraged and when submitted with articles the permission to include is assumed.

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Editorial

By Vera Bernard-Opitz

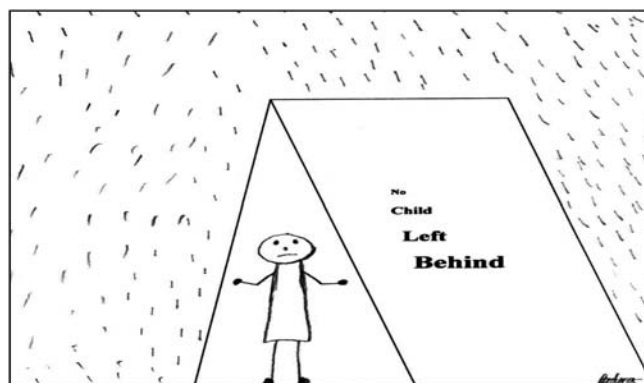
After a recent talk in Berlin on “Schools for Children with ASD in Singapore and Germany,” a colleague approached me, indicating that she had enjoyed my talk and videos about the sophisticated evidence-based services that California and Singapore offer for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). She then invited me to visit a very different program for individuals with ASD in Northern Germany and promised to send me a CD on adult group homes and vocational programs. The CD arrived a week later and it left me wondering how to build bridges between our approaches, which are each so appropriate, yet divergent.

On the CD from Northern Germany, adults with ASD and different levels of disability were shown living in a picturesque and quiet house in the country, surrounded by acres of countryside. With trained staff they were busied all day long cutting wood in the forest, sawing, stacking and using it for their fireplace or preparing it to be sold. Others worked in the small woodshop, making necessary repairs to fences or creating small ornaments for sale. Individuals who liked more sensory activities were packing home-grown tea leaves, helping in the kitchen or getting their hands dirty setting bulbs into the soil. Adults with repetitive tendencies were engaged in spinning wool or weaving, while those who enjoyed animals were feeding pigs or sheep, collecting chickens’ eggs or cleaning the animals’ stalls. While these activities seem very appropriate, visual support, communication systems, computer-assisted instruction and all the wonders of recent developments in treatments for this population were very basic or sorely missing. Attempts to integrate residents into the community were mentioned, but did not seem to be typical. Selling products or shopping provided only occasional experience with the “regular world.”

The above example may bring bright visions of a more traditional, stress-free lifestyle to some, while making others shudder.

When it comes to “Education” as the focus topic of the current newsletter, we are obviously dealing with a wide range of goals, methods and values. In educating children, adolescents and adults with ASD, Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs), integration efforts, and attempts to foster independence and to meet the benchmarks posed by standardized testing tend to guide current educational practices.

In general, as well as special education, parents hope that the teacher knows best, while teachers trust their educational background, the state standards and the impressive-looking textbooks. Often there is no time to reflect upon the long-term goal of education or to search for ways to optimize learning for an individual. Education and service providers often founder in the daily struggle of trying to race behind the “No Child Left Behind” flag, sometimes ignoring the toll school challenges may take on the affected child and their families.



While we can contribute a vast array of teaching methods and curriculum tasks, we may need to reflect upon the general focus of special education and consider the possibility that the student’s happiness, self-esteem and quality of life are equally as important as test outcomes and school ranking. **And while we so-called “neuro-typicals” have the choice to raise chickens, follow a vocational interest or aim for Harvard, we may also need to provide a range of opportunities as well as appropriate guidance for all students.**

Our first contributor, **Glen Dunlap**, is a prominent researcher and former Director of the Department of Child and Family Studies at the University of South Florida, who has initiated an important movement for individuals with ASD,

focusing on Positive Behavior Support. In his contribution with Karen Berkman, Director of the Florida Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, strategies are outlined to help people with autism lead more competent and satisfying lives.

Agnes Ly, master's student of **Wendy Goldberg** (University of California, Irvine) discusses the inclusion mandate and the challenges teachers face with students with ASD. What can be done to improve the educational experience for this population?

Larry Belkin, Chief of Special Education Services at Orange County Department of Education, reflects on the ultimate purpose of education, which aims to prepare students for meaningful participation in their communities. Are the social, recreational and vocational needs of students with ASD sufficiently considered in the current educational system?

Integration of the various supports a student requires is often difficult. **Brenda Smith Myles**, Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Kansas, and **Shawn Henry**, Executive Director, Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence, introduce the "Comprehensive Autism Planning System," which is a simple but useful way to indicate all necessary support in a student's daily schedule.

Sharon Gramling, a special education teacher at Mission Viejo High School, shares her experience at the forefront of teaching high school students with various disabilities. With enthusiasm, creativity and advanced technology she adapts the curriculum to a range of special needs.

Bobby McIntyre shows the daily ups and downs parents of children with ASD face in the community, where even a simple restaurant visit can develop into an emotional roller coaster.

Susan, Amanda and Victoria Baker share their excitement with a "Social Thinking" group strongly influenced by the work of Michelle Garcia Winner and offered at San Clemente High School. Dreams sometimes come true when teachers, families and professionals all work hand in hand.

Various additional highlights make this issue interesting as well as useful. While we may not always be able to combine the best of all worlds, we may be able to spread workable ideas and visions for long-term developments. Again, we thank all authors for their contributions and invite our readers to send in comments and articles for the **coming issue, which will focus on Behavior Issues.**

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(References can be sent upon request.) ♡



My Hero

My hero is my sister. My sister Emma, was diagnosed with autism. Emma is eight years old and very smart. Autism is usually very hard to live with.

Usually my Mom and Dad are in meetings and she is always in occupational therapy. Having an autistic sister has been a big learning experience for me; I even read a book about it. I thought it was bad enough, then my cousin Jordyn was born with autism too.

My Mom and my aunt tell me that God gave us Emma and Jordyn because he thought we could handle it, but sometimes we can't. I love them so much. I wish I could find a cure for autism. Without my sister I wouldn't understand. Now I'm thinking about working with special needs kids when I grow up. With Emma in my life I am interested in helping them.

Brianna Baltodano, Age 10 ♡



Online!

Visit us online at www.autismnewsoc.org!

Autism News is celebrating three years of bringing you research-based strategies, innovative educational approaches, best practices and personal experiences in the area of autism. All of our back issues are available online, including:

Editorials and Focus articles on

- Family issues (Fall, 2006)
- Evidence-based practices (Summer, 2006)
- Transition and integration (Winter/Spring, 2006)
- Treatment approaches (Summer/Fall, 2005)
- Recent trends in research, diagnosis, treatment and education (Spring, 2005)

Research articles by

- Michelle Ficcaglia & Bryna Siegel, University of California, San Francisco (Fall, 2006)
- Laura Schreibman & Aubyn Stahmer, University of California, San Diego (Summer, 2006)
- Marisa Macy, Helen Sharp & Ruby Chan, University of Oregon (Summer, 2006)
- Heather McCracken & Pamela Wolfberg, San Francisco State University (Winter/Spring, 2006)
- Peter Gerhardt, Arlington, VA (Winter/Spring, 2006)
- Jed Baker, Maplewood, N.J. (Winter/Spring, 2006)
- Candace Wilkenson & Marion Sigman, UCLA (Summer/Fall, 2005)
- Judy Sylva, Cal State University, Fullerton (Summer/Fall, 2005)
- Sven Bölte & Fritz Poustka, Frankfurt University (April, 2005)
- Tamara Daley, UCLA (April, 2005)
- Bryna Siegel, University of California, San Francisco (October, 2004)
- Gary Mesibov, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (October, 2004)
- Dorothea Lerman, Louisiana State University (June, 2004)

Education features by

- Barbara Bloomfield, Goshen, New York (Fall, 2006)
- Lauren Franke, Seal Beach, CA (Summer, 2006)
- Ron Larson, Asheville, North Carolina (Summer/Fall, 2005)
- Christina Romansky, Andrea Walker & Mark Akstinas, Orange Co. Depart. of Ed. (Summer/Fall, 2005)
- Rita Jordan, University of Birmingham (April, 2005)
- Diana Twachtman-Cullen, Connecticut (June, 2004)
- Michelle Garcia Winner, San Jose (June, 2004)
- Brenda Smith Myles and Amy Schapman, University of Kansas, (October, 2004)
- Kelly McKinnon, Mission Viejo (October, 2004)

Family articles on topics such as

- Success through a communication device (Fall, 2006)
- Use of digital pictures (Fall, 2006)
- Friendship, relationship and high-functioning autism (Fall, 2006)
- Grandparent Autism Network (Fall, 2006)
- Transitions from a parent's perspective (Winter/Spring, 2006)
- Life skills (Winter/Spring, 2006)
- Ten things every child with autism wishes you knew (Summer, 2006)
- Yoga (April, 2005)
- Sensory issues (June, 2004)

Shared Sponsorship

To sustain the quality of the Autism News shared sponsorship is being considered. Please contact us for further information at verabernard@cox.net.

Please note that we are exploring the feasibility of translating part of the Autism News into other languages. ♥

Positive Behavior Support and Autism Spectrum Disorders

By Karen Berkman and Glen Dunlap

The lives of many children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are negatively affected by behaviors that are disruptive, destructive, socially peculiar or irritating. Such behaviors are the greatest impediment to inclusion, community participation, and access to social, leisure, educational and vocational opportunities. Over the past twenty years, an approach known as Positive Behavior Support (PBS) has gained widespread popularity and data-based support as a general strategy for addressing problem behaviors and helping people with autism (as well as people *without* autism) to lead richer, more competent and more fulfilling lives. This article provides a description of PBS along with an example of PBS being applied to resolve the seriously challenging behaviors of a boy with ASD.

What is PBS?

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is an approach developed by Glen Dunlap and other researchers from applied behavior analysis combined with person-centered values to assist children and adults with challenging behavior. This holistic approach allows us to assist individuals with disabilities such as ASD in achieving positive outcomes and sustaining changes in their lives. We accomplish this by designing interventions that strengthen existing skills, build new functional skills, and prevent challenging behavior. Our overall goal is for people to be able to engage in meaningful home, school and community activities without the interference of negative behavior.

Key Components of PBS

PBS has several key features:

- 1) PBS recognizes that a team approach is needed to help a person with challenges and that ongoing communication among team members is critical. The family has an important role in informing the process and developing solutions. One way to ensure successful outcomes is for the team to meet regularly and discuss what is working and what needs updating.

- 2) PBS has a focus on positive recognition of the efforts made by an individual. Strategies such as redirection, reinforcement of new behaviors and skills, and supporting the individual through recognition of his/her feelings are all utilized to increase the likelihood that new behaviors will occur with greater frequency.
- 3) PBS interventions are tailored to meet the needs of an individual. Through completing a functional assessment, we can determine the events surrounding the challenging behavior, what motivates and maintains that behavior, and the purpose the behavior serves. Once we understand the function of the behavior, we can then design interventions that meet the person's needs in a more socially acceptable manner and promote successful participation in daily activities across settings.

What are the steps to PBS?

Many authors describe the implementation of PBS as a process consisting of the following steps:

- **Assemble the team.** Identify and gather a team of people who are invested in creating a positive outcome. It is important to have the people who know the individual best as part of the team, such as teachers, family, friends, etc. This ensures that strategies can be applied to multiple settings and create a consistent approach throughout an individual's day.
- **Identify the goals.** Discuss person-centered goals that the team will target - these are goals that express the hopes and dreams for a quality life that each team member, including the individual being assessed, has, such as being able to have a best friend or participate in a community recreation activity with neighborhood children, or, for adults, the dream of having a meaningful job or a place to live with a chosen roommate.
- **Complete a functional assessment.** The team completes the information-gathering process for functional assessment by identifying the behaviors in question, the context for those behaviors, when they occur and what might trigger the behaviors.

- **Develop hypotheses.** The team clearly delineates the function of the target behavior and the conditions under which it occurs and develops hypotheses.
- **Design a behavior plan.** The team designs a plan which includes:
 - a) the *modifications* that are required in the *strategies used*, the settings, the activities, routines and schedules, or the ways in which others interact with the individual, all with the purpose of preventing challenging behavior based on what has been learned from the functional assessment;
 - b) the design and use of instruction to *teach replacement skills* that serve the same function as the challenging behavior; and
 - c) the *reinforcement of new skills* to maintain their use.
- **Implement the plan and evaluate outcomes.** The team implements the plan, monitoring its use and progress, updating as needed and evaluating outcomes. The team will gather and review the outcome data on a regular basis to ensure that the strategies are working across all settings and make changes as needed to maintain successful patterns.

Ryan's story

Let's take a look at how PBS was used for an elementary school student diagnosed with autism who demonstrated the behaviors of hitting and biting in school.

"Ryan" was a seven-year-old boy who attended an inclusive classroom. He had limited speech, but relatively good receptive language skills. He used an augmentative communication device, but lacked consistent access to it in the classroom. Ryan could read and write on a kindergarten-to-first grade level. Since he started in his new second grade classroom, Ryan had been demonstrating difficult behaviors such as hitting others and biting himself. His teacher thought his behavior might be a result of the new classroom and teacher; however, it had been three months, and Ryan's behavior was escalating in fre-

quency and intensity. The teacher felt the behavior "just started out of nowhere" and she saw no pattern to the behavior. Ryan's teacher believed that she needed help.

RYAN ASKS FOR HELP

When I am at school, the teacher gives us directions for each math lesson.



All of the children follow the teacher's directions. I can follow directions too.

There are lots of directions to follow for math class. I might have to take out my pencil, get a piece of paper, read instructions from the blackboard or listen to my teacher read a problem. I can forget a direction and need help from my teacher.

I can raise my hand and the teacher can come to my desk and ask me what I need.



I can use my Dynavox to say "help please" and the teacher will come to my desk and ask me what I need.

I will be able to get help if I ask.

I will raise my hand or use my Dynavox to get help when I need it.

PBS Steps to Success for Ryan

Ryan’s teacher recognized her need for new ideas and strategies to help her plan for a successful school year. Here are the action steps she took to move Ryan toward a positive outcome:

- 1) **Assemble the team.** Ryan’s teacher contacted the local Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (see box) through the University of South Florida where Ryan was a constituent. His CARD consultant contacted the teacher and they decided to assemble a team that included the parents, teacher, CARD consultant, school principal and speech pathologist.
- 2) **Identify the goals.** The team discussed the problem behaviors that were interfering with Ryan’s day and identified the goal of intervention. In this case, the principle goal was to reduce the incidence of hitting others and biting himself so that Ryan could fully participate in his education.
- 3) **Complete a functional assessment.** The team requested that the school behavior analyst look at the defined target behaviors, observe in the classroom to collect data on the occurrence of those behaviors and interview the parents and teacher about when, how, with whom these behaviors occur as well as what is happening in the environment before, during and after the occurrence of the behavior. The behavior analyst determined that hitting occurred with peers during recess, waiting in line and lunch. Biting himself occurred when the teacher placed demands on Ryan for academic performance during math and other activities where Ryan has to complete multiple steps to perform a task with a single verbal instruction by the teacher.
- 4) **Develop hypotheses.** The team reviewed the data collected during the functional assessment and determined that Ryan engaged in challenging behavior a) to gain the attention of peers; b) to initiate contact with peers; c) to escape demand situations where he did not understand the instructions; d) to escape activ-

ities that were too difficult; and e) to request assistance.

- 5) **Design a behavior plan.** Ryan’s team developed a three-tiered behavior support plan that addressed three types of strategies; prevention, teaching and skill building. Prevention strategies included providing Ryan with a means of communicating his desire to initiate or join with peers in an activity. First and foremost was having Ryan keep his communication device with him during all activities at school. The team created a social script to demonstrate how to initiate and interact with peers. The teacher also checked in with Ryan when target activities were coming up in the daily schedule to provide Ryan with choices of friends he might want to play with during recess. Teaching strategies included having the teacher provide concise instruction verbally and in writing. It was important for Ryan to have a way to request assistance when he did not understand the task. A written cue was available on his desk to raise his hand and to use his communication device to indicate that he needed help.



- 6) **Implement the plan and evaluate outcomes.** It was important that the teacher provided the reinforcement required to motivate Ryan to use appropriate means of communication. Specific skill building was required to help Ryan expand the use of his communication device during target times of day. In addition, the teacher needed to teach Ryan the skill of raising his hand when assistance was needed instead of biting his hand. The teacher was unaware that she was inadvertently reinforcing

this behavior by responding to Ryan's negative behavior. She used redirection if the behavior occurred to have Ryan raise his hand before she provided assistance. Ryan also learned how to request a break before becoming so frustrated that he resorted to biting his hand.

Summary

Ryan showed success in reducing his behavior to near-zero levels in a rather short period of time. This case illustrates the use of positive behavior support in helping a student interact with his peers and participate fully in the academic and social activities of his school day without the interference of negative behavior. As we can see, behavior is a way for individuals to communicate. Providing alternate methods of communication as well as opportunities to use one's voice throughout the day to make choices, ask for help, interact with peers or participate in acade-

mics is key to success. Another important element is understanding the function of the challenging behavior so that the new skills taught will serve the same function. Having a supportive team that communicates regularly allows for support, updating strategies as needed and review of outcomes.

Where can I find more information on PBS?

There are many useful websites with helpful content about PBS:

www.pbis.org – the site of the national training and technical assistance center on PBS;

www.apbs.org – the site of the international Association for Positive Behavior Support

www.challengingbehavior.org – the Center on Evidence-based Practice for Young Children with Challenging Behaviors.

There are also many books and manuals about PBS. Two are:

Families and Positive Behavior Support: Addressing Problem Behavior in Family Contexts. Edited by Joseph Lucyshyn, Glen Dunlap, and Richard Albin. Brookes Publishing Co., 2002.

Behavioral Support: Teacher's Guides to Inclusive Practices. By Rachel Janney and Martha E. Snell. Brookes Publishing Co., 2000.

A useful journal is the *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, published quarterly by PRO-ED, Austin, Texas.

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THE FLORIDA CENTER FOR AUTISM AND RELATED DISABILITIES

The Florida Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) was first developed by the legislature of the state of Florida in 1990 at the University of South Florida. Three years later, Florida's CARD was formally established as a statewide system of supports, striving to offer a place to turn for everybody affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in the state of Florida, and working to enhance the capacity of schools and community agencies to deliver a full range of effective services for the ASD population. Today, Florida's CARD operates out of seven university locations around the state (with a number of additional satellite programs). The program does not offer direct treatment, but instead provides assistance through consultation and capacity building for individuals (children and adults), families, schools and communities.

CARD at the University of South Florida is located in Tampa and provides training, technical assistance and capacity building for 14 counties in the south central and southwest portions of the state. A principle focus of CARD-USF's services is Positive Behavior Support. The following web sites provide more information about CARD and related services at USF: <http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu>.

Teachers and the Inclusion Movement

By Agnes Ly

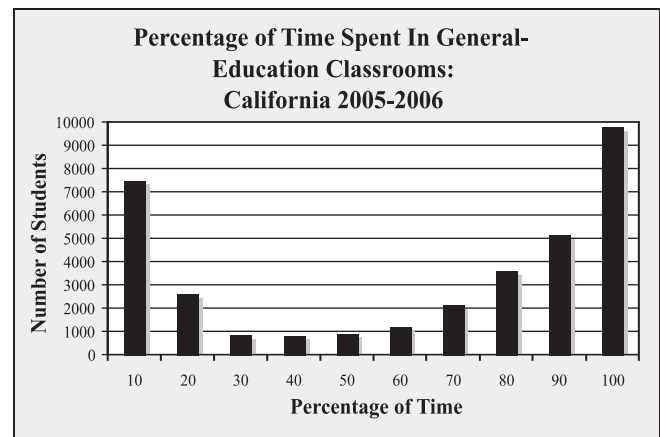
At the age of seven, Justin, who has autism, was placed in a general-education classroom. Justin's parents had high hopes that through inclusion, he would finally get the chance to work and play with all the other "normal" children. Unfortunately, Justin often overwhelmed his teacher, who constantly deferred to the assigned paraprofessional, leaving Justin to work alone with his aide as the rest of the class worked and socialized together. Though Justin was assigned to an inclusive setting, he was by no means included.

Inclusion is, without a doubt, a noble goal for children with special needs such as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Through legislative movements, school systems have seen an impressive rise in the number of children with disabilities within general-education classrooms. However, the attempts to include special needs children have not always met with success. Teachers often feel unprepared and unequipped within the current educational infrastructure for the inclusion of children with ASD or related conditions. To promote the success of inclusion, instructors need the proper emotional and educational support provided by increased and targeted training and collaboration with parents and other professionals.

After a long period of exclusion from the general-education public classrooms, the lives of all children with disabilities changed in 1975 with the **Education for All Handicapped Children Act**. This act allowed children with disabilities and their families the right to "a free appropriate public education." Still, until 1997, special needs children were placed in separate classrooms and were "pulled out" to spend a portion of the school day in a regular classroom.

The government's commitment to include children with disabilities in general-education classrooms was reaffirmed in 1997 with the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** and again

in 2004, with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. In 2005, according to the U.S. Department of Education, 34,668 students with ASD were enrolled in special education in California. In Orange County alone, there were nearly 4,000 students with ASD.



The debate rages on as to whether inclusion is the best educational strategy for all children with ASD. However, the impact of autism in the classroom is undeniable. In California, fifty-three percent of children with ASD spent at least 70% of their day in a general-education setting (see above graph). As these children steadily flow into general-education classrooms, have the school systems, and most critically, the teachers, been prepared with the

resources and knowledge to cope with and serve the needs of children with ASD?

It is particularly important to examine the attitudes and perceptions of teachers as

they are given direct responsibility for educating these students. Research has shown that teachers and professionals who have experience with children with ASD are more confident and positive about inclusion (McGregor & Campbell, 2001). Additionally, lower levels of behavior problems and increased social acceptance were recorded when teachers reported more positive relationships with children with ASD (Robertson,

Fifty-three percent of children with ASD spend at least 70% of their day in a general-education setting.

Chamberlain, and Kasari, 2003). These findings attest to the importance of the teacher's role in the academic and social growth of children with ASD.

Unfortunately, many general-education teachers are put in the position of trying to teach children with varying disabilities in one classroom with little to no preparation. Not surprisingly, teachers and school-based professionals consider themselves less than capable when it comes to educating children with ASD (Spears, Tollefson, & Simpson, 2001). In studies, general-education teachers felt that they needed more training on autism and particularly valued paraprofessionals and other school personnel with autism-specific training (Glashan, MacKay, & Grieve, 2004; Jindal-Snappe, Douglas, Topping, Kerr, & Smith, 2005). Teachers' feelings of being unsupported and overwhelmed by the inclusion mandate likely impact not only the potential benefits of inclusion for children with ASD but also his/her effectiveness with all students in the classroom.

GOAL

To increase the effectiveness of inclusion, parents, teachers and other professionals need to collaborate.

According to the ASD Inclusion Collaboration Model (Simpson, Boer-Ott, Smith-Myles, 2003), a major step in increasing the support for educators (thereby increasing the effectiveness of inclusion) is to involve everyone who works with children with ASD, from their parents to the speech therapist to their teachers. It is crucial to have all these people working toward the same goals from complementary, yet differing angles. A shared sense of responsibility and common goals between all educators and

Our Class Rules

1. We walk.



2. We listen.



3. We share.



4. We clean up.



5. We take care of our school.



professionals has been associated with increased feelings of support and a higher quality teacher-student relationship (Robertson, Chamberlain, and Kasari, 2003). When teachers feel the proper level of social support and believe that they can jointly solve a problem, they are more likely to feel prepared and be invested in taking responsibility for improving teaching strategies for children with ASD.

Ideally, school systems would be reconstructed to promote collaboration and communication between all parties involved. Due to IDEA and the improvements made upon it in 2004, parents are able to have an Individualized

Education Program (IEP), which is designed to foster some collaboration.

Unfortunately, we have to consider the realities of the current education situation: bureaucracy, constant lack of funding, large classroom sizes, instructors and paraprofessionals who lack neces-

STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH ASD

- Seat the child near the front of the classroom and away from distractions (e.g., windows and doors)
- Create daily visual schedules
- Minimize changes to routines and when they do occur, highlight them in the daily schedules to prepare the child
- Organize assignments and notebooks with different colors or symbols for different subjects
- Create a visual for the rules of the classroom
- Keep rules and directions very concise
- Arrange social interaction opportunities with structured games
- Write notes regarding the day's events to send home to the parents in the child's folder

(Adapted from the TEACCH program and Chaswal, 2006)



sary training, limited curriculum planning time, and a lack of overall support and resources for teachers. Despite these barriers, small steps can be taken within our current situation to implement a collaborative approach that can improve the inclusion process for children with ASD. Parents must actively participate in their child's development in conjunction with teachers. Teachers must continue expanding their knowledge of ASD and actively seek creative teaching methods. By taking these steps, all the people charged with the growth and well-being of children with ASD can together lay the foundation for future restructuring.

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STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION

- Ongoing training of teachers
- Active participation of parents

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- **TEACCH program**
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The Purpose of Special Education

By Larry Belkin



The purpose of Special Education should be intimately aligned with the purpose of general education, which is *to help prepare students to become good citizens who are meaningfully and actively involved in their communities.*

When **PL 94-142** became law in the 1970s, it recognized that all children do not learn necessarily in the same way or at the same rate - thus the birth of the **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**. The idea of the IEP was to design instruction around the unique abilities of children with disabilities, based on their assessed needs. IEPs were developed for a diversity of learners, including those with severe cognitive disabilities, as well as for children with normal intellectual skills but who had either specific learning disabilities or emotional, physical or other neurological disabilities. IEPs provided indi-

would agree that *individually designed instruction* based on the assessed needs of children would be ideal for all learners.

The 1990s began the reform movement for general education. The introduction of grade level standards to be adopted statewide for all learners provided an opportunity to insure accountability for general education students. Schools' test scores were published for the public to ensure that each school was progressing toward the goal that no learner would be left behind. When the reform movement moved to the federal level with the adoption of "**No Child Left Behind**," all learners were included in a statewide accountability system aligned to each state's academic standards, even students with severe cognitive disabilities. This

**NO CHILD
LEFT
BEHIND**

culminated with a gradual shift in the purpose of education. *The purpose of education became more narrowly focused on the academic achievement of students, rather than on students' broader development including functional, social, artistic, and technical skill development.* Technical, vocational and career education became less and less available in schools that were under tremendous pressure to show school-wide and district-wide academic growth for their students. This became problematic for many learners



vidual accountability to parents, based on data collected on the goals and objectives that were developed through their participation on the IEP team. The ultimate goal of all IEPs was to help students realize their potential and to prepare them for a meaningful and productive life. I think most of us

who had other-than-academic talents. The state had become so focused on academic achievement testing that instruction in many schools ceased during the last months of school in order to prepare students for, and then to administer, the high-stakes testing now required nationally.

With the passage of PL 94-142 back in the 1970s, school communities were beginning the journey toward more inclusive educational opportunities for students with disabilities. Opportunities to have meaningful participation in many general education activities were plentiful as students with even the most significant disabilities could interact with students who were not disabled. As the focus on the purpose of education narrowed, and with the pressure related to high-stakes testing, many students with disabilities have found their participation in general education to be less meaningful or comfortable. School administrators who are concerned with their school's test scores may not welcome students with disabilities who may bring down those scores. With the mandate that all students, even those with the most significant disabilities, participate in state-wide academic testing, the concept of individually designed programs based on the assessed needs of students is giving way to programs designed around the high-stakes tests that all students must take.

With the pressure related to high-stakes testing, many students with disabilities are finding their participation in general education to be less meaningful...

If the ultimate purpose of education is to prepare students to have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities, including vocational, recreational and leisure time activities, then the standards for accountability need to be aligned to reflect those outcomes. For example, **there should be standards related to a student's social, vocational and recreational needs.** Accountability testing should be based on individual student progress or growth toward these broadened standards, rather than only measuring a student's success by his or her achievement on an academic standardized test. This is not to say that standardized testing is not meaningful, however, it is only one type of measure and should be used only on students whose school program is represented or reflected in the

Technical, vocational and career education became less and less available in schools...

standardized test questions. Testing should also be modified to address any limitations imposed by a student's disability. Other measures should also be used to assure that students have an opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned, not only in academic areas, but in the other very important areas that prepare students to be good citizens and contributing members of society.

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SPARKLE

By Carmen Richardson Rutlen

Most of the time I like myself pretty well, except when I'm feeling
 confused
 stupid
 mean
 lazy
 wrong.



Most of the time I feel like a little sparkle in everyone's life. However, I wish I felt more like a sparkle in my son's life. It's not for want of trying. I just don't feel like I know how. I try everything to see if anything will work. Sometimes I'm afraid I'll run out of things to try.

Maybe, just maybe, I'm not supposed to sparkle to him at his age. Maybe he needs to find his own sparkle. And perhaps he needs to block out mine...so he can see his own.

Carmen Richardson Rutlen ♥

Planning for a Successful Day:

Comprehensive Autism Planning System

By Shawn A. Henry and Brenda Smith Myles

Multidisciplinary teams, including parents, spend a significant amount of time on students' Individualized Education Program (IEP), identifying present level of performance as well as goals and objectives that will help them be successful in school. However, even though student outcomes are delineated, transferring those outcomes to a student's daily program is often challenging (Aspy & Grossman, 2007). For example, if a student's IEP indicates that she needs sensory input, educators, in particular general educators, often do not know what type of support should be provided and when it should occur. The same child may also need a choice board or a visual schedule to enhance performance and daily functioning. Even though they are integral to a child's success, these accommodations may not be listed on the IEP. Failure to use them can result in frustration for both the teacher and the child, limitations in accessing the general education curriculum, or severe behavior challenges.

When planning programs for children and youth, it is essential that all educational professionals understand how and when to implement instructional recommendations and supports. This is particularly important for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) because they require consistency, preparation for events prior to their occurrence, and supports that match their learning style (typically visual) (Janzen, 2003).

Another important consideration is often not addressed: Supports must be created so that they are compatible not only with the child's needs, but also with the environment. For example, if a child sits at a desk most of the time during a class, a visual support that is attached with Velcro® to the desk or to a notebook may be useful. But if the child moves frequently during class, she may need a visual support that moves with her or is accessible from all parts of the classroom.

It is critical that supports be planned by and communicated to all teachers who work with the students with ASD. This will ensure that the supports match

the student's environment and that educational professionals know when and where they are to be used across the school day.

The Comprehensive Autism Planning System (CAPS)

To date, few models have been available to accomplish these challenging, yet critical tasks. Fewer yet are easily developed and implemented. However, now a new model, the Comprehensive Autism Planning System (CAPS) (Henry & Myles, 2007), meets all the above criteria. Briefly, simple to develop and use, CAPS provides an overview of a student's daily schedule by time and activity with a specification of supports that are needed during each period. Following the development of the student's IEP, all educational professionals who work with the student develop the CAPS. Thus, the CAPS enables professionals and parents to answer the fundamental question: **What supports does the student need for each activity?**

As shown in Figure 1, the CAPS is a list of a student's tasks and activities, the times they occur, and with a delineation of the supports needed for student success. In addition, the CAPS includes a place for recording data collection and consideration of how skills are to be generalized to other settings.

Components of CAPS

Specifically, the CAPS contains the following components:

- 1) **Time.** This section indicates the clock time of each activity that the student engages in throughout the day.
- 2) **Activity.** Activities include *all* tasks and activities throughout the day in which the student requires support. Academic periods (e.g., reading), nonacademic times (e.g., recess, lunch), as well as transitions between classes would all be considered activities.
- 3) **Targeted Skills to Teach.** This may include IEP goals, state standards, and/or skills that lead to school success for a given student.

- 4) **Structure/Modifications.** Structures/modifications can encompass a wide variety of supports, including placement in the classroom, visual supports (e.g., choice boards, visual schedules), peer supports (e.g., Circle of Friends, peer buddies) and instructional strategies (e.g., priming, self-monitoring).
- 5) **Reinforcement.** Student access to specific types of reinforcement as well as reinforcement schedules are listed here.
- 6) **Sensory Strategies.** Sensory supports and strategies identified by an occupational therapist or others are listed in this CAPS area.
- 7) **Communication/Social Skills.** Specific communication goals or activities as well as supports are delineated in this section. Goals or activities may include: a) requesting help; b) taking turns in conversation; or c) protesting appropriately. Supports may encompass: a) language boards; b) PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) book; or c) some other augmentative communication system.
- 8) **Data Collection.** This space is for recording the type of data as well as the behavior to be documented during a specific activity. Typically, this section relates directly to IEP goals and objectives.
- 9) **Generalization Plan.**

Because individuals with ASD often have problems generalizing information across settings, this section of the CAPS was developed to ensure that generalization of skills is built into the child's program.

CAPS in Action: Ginny

The following brief case study shows how CAPS was implemented for an 8-year-old student with ASD, Ginny. Ginny is in the second grade and was tested in the “below-

average age.” Ginny uses PECS (Frost & Bondy, 2002) to communicate, but shows limited generalization to school staff and none among peers. She receives her education in a kindergarten-first grade resource room and is included during “specials” and early-morning calendar group.

Ginny was experiencing some behavioral issues related to transitions, attention to task, and interacting appropriately with peers. Observations in Ginny's classrooms confirmed problematic behavioral issues and revealed an inconsistent use of supports by school staff. Ginny's team met to create a CAPS to match Ginny's daily schedule. A partial view of the CAPS is presented in Figure 1.

Similar to most students, Ginny's day begins before her first academic class. Ginny starts the day with breakfast at school. As shown on her CAPS, Ginny will be learning three skills during this time:

- a) making choices;
- b) using a language board; and
- c) using a schedule.

Choice and language boards support skill use, and the reinforcement is natural – eating the food she chooses. While Ginny did not need sensory supports for this activity, she did require communication and social interventions. Therefore, she had comments to

Comprehensive Autism Planning System (CAPS)								
Child/Student: Ginny								
Time	Activity	Targeted Skills to Teach	Structure/ Modifications	Reinforcement	Sensory Strategies	Communication Social Skills	Data Collection	Generalization Plan
7:30-7:55	Transition from car to breakfast	Choice of breakfast using breakfast board Use of interactive language board Independent use of schedule	Choice board of breakfast items Interactive language board Visual schedule	Choice of food items	Not at this time	Add more social language on board (greetings, questions) Table manners	Data sheet for choice Data use of interactive language board	Use of language boards during lunch or dinner at home
8:05-8:20	Independent morning work	Independent work of mastered math problems Self-monitoring	Visuals to break down task (1-5, raise hand, finished)	Completion of 5 problems – break of her choice	Black construction paper box around problem to write in box Slant board with textured paper underneath for more feedback	Following general education classroom rules	Use of self-monitoring sheets Data sheet for transitions	Self-monitoring in other subjects

Figure 1. Ginny's CAPS for two activities.

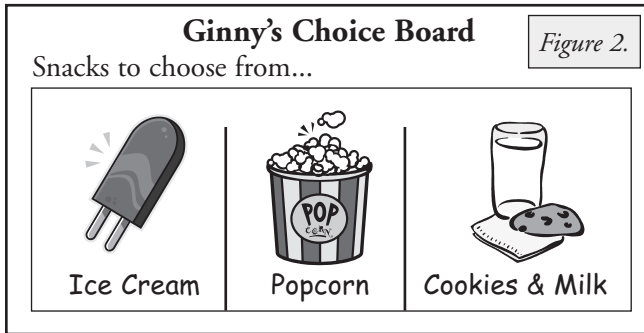


Figure 2.

make to peers on her language board and a visual support that illustrated table manners. Data were collected on making choices and on the number of times she used her language board. Ginny's choice board appears in Figure 2.

Between 8:05 am and 8:20 am, Ginny engaged in completing independent morning work. As illustrated, the CAPS details supports for this task. For example, Ginny was to complete five math problems, which would result in her earning a break. A visual support was used to break down the task into its component parts. Sensory supports included a box that masked problems on the worksheet and a slant board to aid in handwriting. Figure 3 shows the sensory support and visual support that Ginny used for math. Ginny's data were collected by Ginny through self-monitoring on following class rules that were posted in the room and by her teacher on completion of the five math problems. For generalization, self-monitoring was chosen; Ginny asked to monitor her own behavior at different times throughout the day. Figure 4 shows Ginny graphing her behavior.

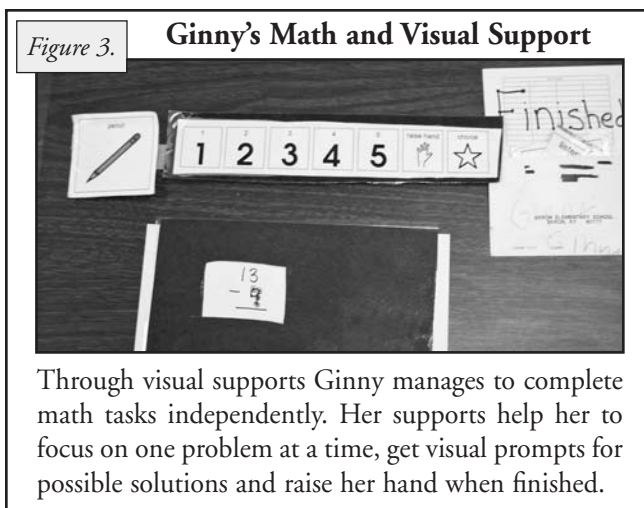


Figure 3.

Ginny's Math and Visual Support

Through visual supports Ginny manages to complete math tasks independently. Her supports help her to focus on one problem at a time, get visual prompts for possible solutions and raise her hand when finished.

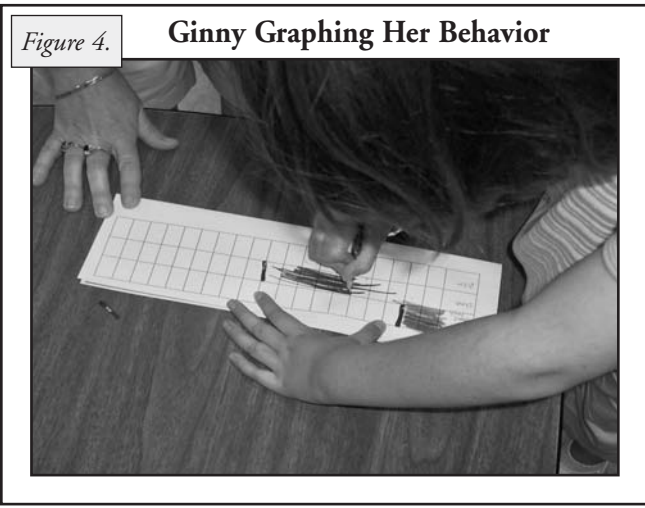


Figure 4.

Ginny Graphing Her Behavior

Summary

The CAPS is a multifaceted program that allows educational professionals to see at a glance a student's goals for each activity and what she needs to be successful for each task. Completed by a team, CAPS can facilitate student independence across settings, activities, and people. The structure of this programming tool gives it broad applicability for children and youth with ASD. Best of all, it is simple to develop and use.

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Thematic Units

By Sharon Gramling

*There are many students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) who have severe challenges in their academic learning. The required general education curriculum is not readily accessible to them through **traditional** instructional strategies. Lack of clarity in instructional settings, an emphasis on verbal instructions, abstract concepts and complex vocabulary are just a few of the hurdles students and their teachers face. In addition, many educational materials are not functional or meaningful for a variety of students with special needs. The following contribution demonstrates how classroom tools can be adapted to individual children's learning styles. Thoughtful modifications, use of assistive technology and creativity can help students with ASD and other special-needs students adapt to the educational standards.*

I am a high school special education teacher with students ranging in age from 14-to 22-years-old, most of which are nonverbal, non-ambulatory, and medically fragile. My greatest challenge is not the students, but that *every student is to be taught to their grade level state-standards*. I have come to understand that this population of students is one of the most difficult to adapt lesson plans to because of the wide discrepancy between the students' cognitive and developmental levels and their chronological age. The variations in their social skills, behavior, sensory issues, communication, motor abilities and medical needs all require individual consideration in the classroom.

I was fortunate enough to enter the teaching profession with a thirty-year background in graphic arts, followed by an education filled with state-of-the-art, assistive technologies for students with special needs. Luck was on my side when I entered the classroom and realized that

my art background and my recent schooling would converge to allow me to reach across a barrier of isolation and into the lives of these students --- a win-win for all!

As I go through a lesson and see a smile, listen to a chuckle of delight, or observe the intensity of focus on a student's face, I know I am reaching each one. Each time it is still amazing to me! But, let me explain...it is simple. The overall concept is a lesson plan that revolves around a **Thematic Unit**.

Thematic Units

music animals clothes climates

Our thematic unit is based on the Caldecott award winning book **"Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters"** beautifully illustrated and written by John Steptoe. This African "Cinderella" story is the hub of our lessons relating to Africa.

lands homes foods peoples

Materials used in "Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters" lesson plan:

"Animals of Africa"

Black smock, if necessary

Dome lights (when overhead lights are off)

Inflatable globe

Green ssssssnake (Nyoka)

One-step communicator (picture and WAV file)

Large animals to hold up in front of students

Realia (for holding goals)

Currently we are working with a Cinderella theme. Most countries of the world have a "Cinderella" tale within their culture. Our unit began with a Caldecott award-winning book, beautifully written

and illustrated by John Steptoe, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*. It is an African "Cinderella" story that takes place in ancient Zimbabwe. To make it more visually accessible I have put the book on overhead transparencies and on Power Point® (one version is narrated, the other is not). Both methods are shown on the wall on a white butcher paper screen that is approximately five feet tall by eight feet wide, bordered with an African motif. As the classroom light is turned down and the intensity of the screen pierces the darkness, all eyes in the classroom migrate toward the screen. I read the story aloud if I use the overhead projector or the unnarrated version of Power Point®, or I play the narrated version. Either way it is captivating for staff and students alike.

There are three wonderful advantages to using Power Point® instead of the overhead projector:

1) Power Point® **allows animation**. Animation aids in directing visual focus, which is especially important for students with visual limitations or lim-

ited ability to focus on instructional materials;

2) The use of Power Point® **provides sound** that is essential for students with significant challenges, such as limited vision or deficits in verbal processing. I found it is a critical balancing act to stimulate sensory input, but not flood too many senses at one time. Some students, with or without

ASD, may be running on "sensory overload" during instruction periods; and

3) Perhaps the most powerful advantage of using Power Point® is that of **timing**. The instructor can control the speed of the presentation by using a remote control on the computer to advance the lesson as needed. This is almost like having another assistant in the classroom since it allows the instructor valuable time to interact with the students, and then move on.


A few more tools that classroom staff may utilize to enhance their instruction include:

- A laser pointer to focus attention.
- A one-step communicator (for example a Language Master™) to answer a question or actually play the recorded sound of the animal as a WAV file. The students love this.
- A transparency image of the animal on a light box brought directly to the student brings the visual range within an acceptable distance for a student with visual limitations.
- Dome lights (sold in most hardware stores) help to focus attention where needed, since the room is darkened. I have had students respond by pressing the light


California State Standards
This Thematic Unit is based on English-language arts content standards utilizing "Literacy response to analysis" skills.

Adaptations

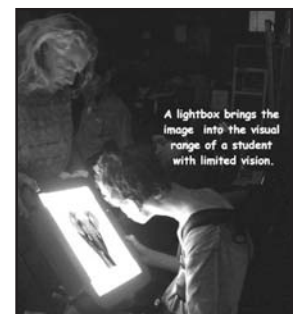
should take place on every level necessary for your population of students.



For the visually impaired a little planning can go a long way...



Find the ball in each picture.



as they would press a large switch.

- Brightly colored pictures or materials, perhaps with textures, are eye-catching for all of us, and contrast is also very effective.

Remember that some students need only a few seconds to process stimulus, while others may take more time. Your instructional pacing is important.

Building on this Thematic Unit, I have spun off of *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* and developed other lesson plans that include the animals, music, foods, cultures, lands, and peoples of Africa. I use a variety of techniques to enhance the students' ability to access, process and respond to the instructional information.

I would like to mention a wonderful byproduct of our Thematic Units and the technology we are utilizing - the concepts of **infusion and integration**.



Neighboring classes for other students with special needs are invited to participate in our lesson, allowing some of the students' mobility goals to be *infused* into our lessons. This offers not only a great incentive to walk to our classroom, but a wonderful reinforcement as well. Any motivational strategy is crucial if it encourages the student to excel.

My hope would be to some day develop a "library of thematic lesson plans," laid out on CDs that are *age appropriate, capture the student's attention, and allow individual creativity*. Staff can mold the lesson to their students' needs, while addressing the State Standards. Some fear that this may stifle a teacher's creativity, but I believe that a good teacher will appreciate this library for what it is and blend their creativity into the lesson plan, allowing it to evolve into something even more spectacular. The only limitation is the imagination!

For further information please contact:

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Teaching Ideas

During the morning circle at the IAC Program, children enjoyed the songs "Down on Grandpa's Farm" and "Old McDonald." They picked animals from the "Mystery Box" and matched them with similar animals in the

barn. Thanks to Meredith Hamilton, NOC-IAC teacher and Tamara Fortney, Speech-Language Pathologist, IAC for sharing a good idea. ♥



Chocolate Mints

By Bobbie McIntyre

One weekday morning last summer, my husband, Tim, and I took our three children and a friend's daughter to the Parasol. The Parasol is a favorite with the local retirement community. My children have all been diagnosed with autism, ranging from severe to high-functioning. The senior citizens that frequent the Parasol often don't mind telling you that your unruly child needs more discipline as most of them are not familiar with autism and form their judgment of parenting skills based on the experiences of their generation.

On this morning, the staff sat us in a large booth farthest away from the front door and the cashier, probably to keep us from scaring away or annoying the other customers. Seated next to us was an elderly lady wearing sunglasses, which made it difficult to judge her temperament. She ignored us as we sat down noisily.

The children, as usual, could not sit quietly. My oldest daughter, who is severely autistic, would occasionally squawk and rock vigorously in the booth. The other three children found it difficult to stay still as well and were soon up and running to the front of the diner.

They spied a large jar of chocolate mints for sale at the cashier's desk and were quickly back asking for some money. My husband produced a dollar and off they dashed. The trio soon returned, fighting over the mints and begging us to open the shiny wrappers for them.

They had just settled back into their seats, eating their chocolate, when the young cashier approached us. I was concerned he had a complaint but instead he handed me some change and cheerfully said that the children hadn't taken enough mints. I laughingly told him it was better that he was bringing us some change rather than asking for more money.

All during this time, the elderly lady sat next to us in stony silence, ignoring us. Occasionally she

would hold up her newspaper in front of her face as if to block us from view.

We ignored her as well as this is what we've learned to do in these situations. We finally got our meals and busily prepared them for the children, cutting up their pancakes, etc. Sometime during the meal the lady got up and left, still not acknowledging our presence.

A few minutes after she departed, the young cashier approached us once again. Out of his hands spilled more than a dozen chocolate mints. We



Practical Tips for Visiting Restaurants

- Try to arrive before or after peak times so your wait will not be too long.
- Get your server's attention early and order a favorite food for your children before your order is sent in.
- Fill the waiting time with favorite games, books, drawings/writing or for "hard core non-waiters," gadgets such as walkmen, Gameboy, digital photo cameras or mini DVD players.
- Visual or regular timers, wait signs, visual schedules on ordering sequences and reinforcement for waiting may also help.
- Some parents have found it helpful to pass out small information cards on autism.

WAIT

I will always remember the staff of the Parasol and their customer's generous gift of chocolate mints as a symbol of understanding and acceptance.

looked at him mystified, while the children gazed in wonder at the pile of bright green wrappers.

He then said, "Compliments of the woman that was seated next to you."

We were flabbergasted. My husband said he was sure we were irritating her, however the waiter confirmed that the elderly lady just wanted to convey her understanding of how difficult it was for us to go out with the children. Since they enjoyed the mints so much, she wanted the children to have them.

On this painful journey of autism that I've been forced to embark on I've had many encounters with other people, some of them positive and some not so positive. It's often easier to remember the negative ones since those emotions are much more hurtful.

However, the staff members at the Parasol have always tried their best to make our experience there positive. Whenever they saw us coming they would quickly put on some toast for our oldest daughter, as they knew this would make her happy and keep her calm. They knew all our children by name and would remember what they liked to eat.

Unfortunately the Parasol is now closed. It has a new owner and is going through renovations. I can only hope that the new staff members will be as tolerant and patient as the previous ones and will convey this to their customers. For my part though, I will always remember them and their customer's generous gift of chocolate mints as a symbol of understanding and acceptance.

Bobbie McIntyre ♥

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Artist: David Davis

By Pat Heneise

"Snakes and snails and puppy dog tails" - that's what our cover artist, David, is made of - he's "all boy" indeed! Art is just one of his many interests. Science, specifically the study of animals, is his favorite subject in school. David started out drawing animals in their natural habitats. He drew the rain forest with snakes, the jungle with monkeys and also his favorite video game on animals. David then went on to portrait drawing, asking each staff member to "sit" for him. We all treasure these original "Davids." All of David's art is a product of his very active imagination.



When asked what his favorite activities are, David replied, "watching sports with Dad, juggling (he is currently teaching himself this skill), art, taking tests 😊 and playing soccer and baseball." He also told me that he wants "to be just like Martin Luther King" (this is our current study). You have to love this boy. He has a heart of gold.

David is 13 years old and currently attends Meadow Park Elementary School in Irvine, California. He is looking forward with great anticipation to attending Junior High School and experiencing all that his new school has to offer.

Pat Heneise

*Teacher, Meadow Park Elementary School
 Orange County Department of Education
 Special Schools Program ♥*

A Dream Come True: Parent's Perspective

By Susan Baker

What do you get when you combine a talented and highly experienced teacher, a curriculum written by Michelle Garcia Winner (see reference) who tends to think “outside the box” when it comes to educating students with social cognitive deficits, support from district and site staff, peer involvement and twelve students with social skills deficits? The answer is - **a dream come true!** My son, Paul, was diagnosed with autism in 1994 and is now a sophomore at San Clemente High School. He is one of the lucky students enrolled in Capistrano Unified School District's pilot **Social Skills** class. San Clemente High School is one of three high schools participating in the pilot based on the “**Social Thinking**”- **I LAUGH Model** developed by Michelle Garcia Winner. Andrea Walker, Coordinator of the **S.U.C.S.E.S.S. Project of Orange County** has been working closely with Michelle Garcia Winner for the last seven years and has arranged for her to present several intensive seminars each year for professionals and parents.

Mrs. Judy Ray, who teaches the class, is a skilled and imaginative professional able to engage and instruct her students even while lecturing flat on her back to illustrate *expected* and *unexpected* behavior. She recently invited parents to visit the class while students gave short speeches and demonstrations of concepts they were learning such as *expected and unexpected behavior, being a detective* and *whole body listening*. Parents were invited to exchange ideas for after school activities to allow students to practice their new skills outside the classroom. Parents picked a month and

“The social skills class is a valuable addition to the life skills curriculum offered to our students with autism. I have seen tremendous growth in students' ability to interact appropriately in social situations.”

— Janet Sobel, Assistant Principal of San Clemente High School



took responsibility for organizing that month's activities for class members and peer buddies. There have already been informal gatherings to play games and to go on outings to SCHS Dance Concerts, McDonald's and the movies. Future plans include pool parties and basketball games. Also attending the after-class meeting to answer questions from the parents and give input was Mrs. Janet Sobol, Assistant Principal, and CUSD Social Skills staff members Denise Weiss-Daughtery and Andrea Whalen.

“The Monday lunch group of peers is such a valuable experience. The peers give up their free time and the buddies love the time they spend together.”

— Judy Ray, Teacher

Mrs. Ray says, “It's exciting to see the progress students are making in how they interact with each other. Students are motivated and willing to try new approaches to increase social interaction. They are creative, fun and so special! The group is incredible to work with and I love it! I also have met so many great parents, aides and autism support staff with this class.”

Mrs. Ray opens her classroom each Monday to allow the “**Best Buddies Club**” to socialize with her students at lunchtime, and on Wednesdays Ms. Whalen plans a lunchtime activity. Ms. Sober

works with peers from the Best Buddies Club to encourage and facilitate school related activities. Each student has a “**Me Binder**” that comes home weekly to update parents on the skills and concepts being worked on and parents are encouraged to write comments, ask questions and practice these skills at home. There is tremendous support for these students from their aides and school staff who find *teachable moments* throughout the day, and from a large group of school peers who enjoy the activities as much as Mrs. Ray’s students do.

As a parent, I first became aware of the term “social skills” in 1994 and thought of it as an easily-learned skill, such as learning about shapes and col-

ors. I now think of it as something covering the entire human experience - always changing and difficult to break into concrete pieces. I like the term “**Social Thinking**” and see my son taking small but vital steps. I’m becoming aware of how hard it must be for him to make sense of what I take for granted, but I am encouraged at his progress and we’re learning that this will be a lifetime endeavor. My family and I are learning along with my son and we’re so grateful for the opportunity that this class provides us. This is an example of collaborative effort at its best!

Susan Baker

Mother of Paul ♥

A Dream Come True: Siblings’ Perspectives

By Amanda and Victoria Baker

As sisters and long-time peer tutors, we are thrilled to see the enthusiasm and the progress of the students in Mrs. Ray’s Social Skills class. We get to see real-life application of these students’ acquired skills through a weekly student-generated forum that requires the students’ active participation with “typical” volunteer peers. The program has been running since the beginning of the fall semester, and with each progressive week, each and every student strives to become more involved, using their newly-acquired skills from the *social thinking program*. These lunchtime activities give the students a chance to regularly socialize through non-stressful games and light activities, with reinforcements that include both physical prizes and social experience.

As an outside activity, the group decided to attend the school’s dance production, but met beforehand at a volunteer’s home to play games and “hang out.” What made the activity extremely successful was the number of students who attended, both from the class and from the lunchtime program, and active participation from everyone. Throughout the early part of the evening, students read the dance production program while commenting on the people they knew, the songs they liked, and other, non-related topics, such as what they are doing in class and what

activities they enjoy. Students also showed initiative in conversation by asking other students about themselves. The students played board games and questioned rules, jokingly accused others of cheating, and tried to claim victory for themselves. Everyone seemed to have real fun, and being together away from school allowed friendships to grow naturally and genuinely. When the parents came to pick up their students, they were just as elated as the peer volunteers to see such a successful evening in motion. Because of the outside practice and the in-class inspiration, these students have flourished.

As sisters, we’ve never seen our brother do so well with others. Paul was so unaware of others around him, and now he is very sensitive to what his friends are thinking, and making wise decisions when it comes to socializing and making, and being, a good friend. He has become so confident, and truly happy to go to school and see others in and outside of class. We are so delighted with the hard work of the teachers, the aides, and our fellow peer volunteers. We wouldn’t trade this program for the world!

Amanda and Victoria Baker

Siblings of Paul ♥

Box Play

By Carolyn Wertheim

All children learn through play to construct, to imagine, to communicate, to problem solve, to develop interpersonal skills, and, last but not least, to have fun. So don't recycle boxes right away – join the excitement! Thanks to Joshua's mom for sharing this excellent idea.



We managed to rescue discarded cardboard from the community pool furniture for a "Bob the Builder" play activity.



Our three kids and their friends squealed with delight seeing the huge boxes, wallpaper, PVC joints and other material.



They wallpapered and painted the boxes and transformed them into houses, hallways and a maze.



Ultimately (and regrettably) the boxes had reached the end of their stay with our family.

We used the opportunity to discuss the importance of recycling. The cardboard box was elected into the "Toy Hall of Fame." ♡

P.U! – A New Board Game Based on Smells

By Donna Owens

Would your child be excited by a game about smells? This new board game requires players to identify smells to move around the board and win the game. It gives the nose a real work out and appeals to children who love sensory input.

In *P.U! The Guessing Game of Smells!*[™] players race through the village of *Odorville* to the finish line. Players must evade the traps set by the naughty skunk, *StinkySmells*[™], who requires the players to identify different smells as they move around the board.

Odorville is made up of different environments where we encounter odors. They include a farm, the beach, the garbage dump, a laundry, a candle shop, restaurants, outdoor areas, garages and a carnival. The board includes over 300 elements of smell. *StinkySmells*[™] the skunk is accompanied by 7 game pieces that smell – a pig, a dog, a turtle, a flower, a trash can, a stinkbug, and a monkey.

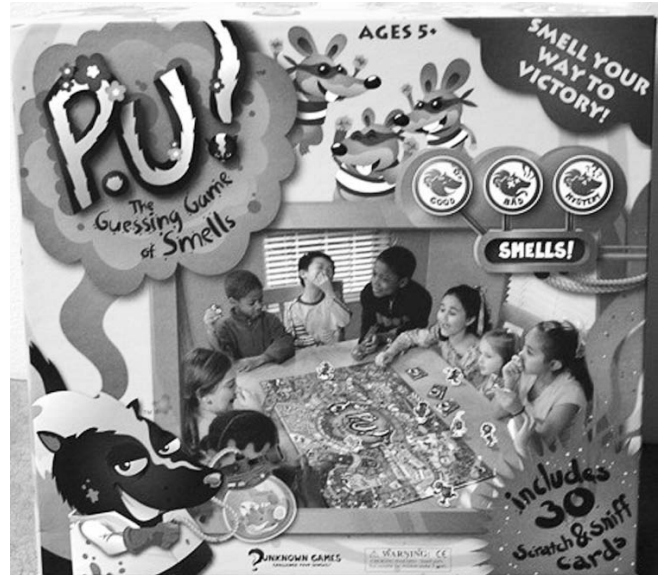
The best part of the game is the scratch and sniff cards. The game comes with 45 cards – 30 of them with scents and 15 cards without scents that require the player to identify things that smell on the board. The smell cards are broken in to 3 categories – good, bad and mystery. The game comes with odors like skunk, manure, peppermint, BBQ sauce, popcorn, etc. Additional refill packs can be purchased with different smells or different themes.

Unknown Games LLC is a Columbus, Ohio-based company creating a new genre of board games.

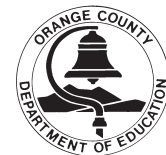
The P.U! game is available online from www.gamepreserve.com. The company can be reached via email at unknowngames@wowway.com

Donna Owens

Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence ♥



We are grateful for the ongoing sponsorship of this newsletter by the following organizations:



WILLIAM M. HABERMEHL
County Superintendent of Schools



Upcoming Staff Development, Conferences and Parent Trainings

(Partial Listing — February to May 2007)

There are several opportunities for continuing education and support that are offered by various organizations. For **OC Kids**, the **Regional Center of Orange County (RCOC)**, and the **S.U.C.S.E.S.S. Project of Orange County** strive to provide affordable fees to both families and staff. Each session has a specific focus, some pertaining to early interventions, some with more of an emphasis on the older-aged student. Registrations may be very limited, therefore call early! Other sessions will be provided throughout the year.

Date/Time/Place	Topic/Speaker	Developmental Level	Approximate Fee	Contact
Feb. 23, 2007 8:30 – 3:30 PM OCDE	Coaching Comprehension – Creative Conversation <i>Lauren Franke, Ph.D.</i>	All Ages	\$65	S.U.C.S.E.S.S. Project (714) 966-4137
March 14, 2007 4:00 – 8:00 PM OCDE	Overview: “Social Thinking – I LAUGH Model” <i>Michelle Garcia Winner</i>	Middle elementary- to secondary-aged students	\$35	S.U.C.S.E.S.S. Project (714) 966-4137
March 15, 2007 8:30 – 3:00 PM OCDE	“Thinking About You, Thinking About Me” <i>Michelle Garcia Winner</i>	Early- to middle-age developmental levels	\$65	S.U.C.S.E.S.S. Project (714) 966-4137
March 16, 2007 8:30 – 3:30 PM OCDE	“Implementing Social Thinking Curriculum into Schools & Home” <i>Michelle Garcia Winner</i>	Early- to middle-age developmental levels	\$65	S.U.C.S.E.S.S. Project (714) 966-4137
March 28, 2007 4:00 – 8:00 PM RCOC	Adolescent Issues: Sex and Integration <i>Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D.</i>	Middle elementary- to secondary-aged students	\$30	RCOC Karen Schaeffer (714) 796-5330
March 30, 2007 8:30 – 3:30 PM OCDE	Transition Issues – Adolescence into Adulthood <i>Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D.</i>	Middle elementary- to secondary-aged students	\$65	S.U.C.S.E.S.S. Project (714) 966-4137
April 2, 2007 8:30 – 3:30 PM OCDE	Refresher Day for Links to Language <i>Lauren Franke, Ph.D.</i>	For those trained in this program	\$65	S.U.C.S.E.S.S. Project (714) 966-4137
May 10, 2007 4:00 – 8:00 PM RCOC	Teaching Communication to Children with Autism <i>Mark Sundberg, Ph.D.</i>	All Ages	\$30	RCOC Karen Schaeffer (714) 796-5330

Locations: **OCDE** = Orange County Department of Education –
200 Kalmus Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92628

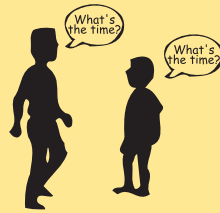
RCOC = Regional Center of Orange County –
801 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana, CA 92702

SOME EXAMPLES OF AUTISTIC BEHAVIOR

ALGUNOS EJEMPLOS DEL COMPORTAMIENTO DE PERSONAS CON AUTISMO



Avoids eye contact
Evita el contacto visual



Copies words like a parrot ("echolalic")
Repite las palabras como un loro
("en forma de echo")



Shows preoccupation with only one topic
Demuestra preocupación/interés en solo un tema/asunto



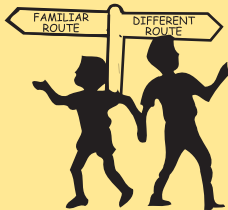
Lacks creative "pretend" play
Carece el juego creativo



Shows indifference
Demuestra indiferencia



Displays special abilities in music, art, memory, or manual dexterity
Demuestra capacidades especiales en musica, arte, memoria or destreza manual



Does not like variety: it's not the spice of life
No demuestra interés en variedad



Shows fascination with spinning objects
Demuestra fascinación con objetos que giran



Shows fear of, or fascination with certain sounds
Demuestra miedo de/ó fascinación con ciertos sonidos



Laughs or giggles inappropriately
Risa/reír inadecuadamente



Shows one-sided interaction
Demuestra interacción que es unilateral



Does not play with other children
No juega con otros niños

Some Examples of Autistic Behavior Algunos ejemplos del comportamiento de personas con autismo

- Difficulty with social interactions.
Tienen dificultad para socializar con otras personas.
- Problems with speech.
Tienen problemas con su lenguaje.
- Disturbed perception.
Tienen una percepción anormal de los sucesos que acontecen a su alrededor.
- Abnormal play.
Su forma de jugar es anormal.
- Resistance to change in routine or environment.
Se resisten a cambios en sus actividad rutinarias ó a su medio ambiente.