

Meeting the Needs of Students with Pervasive Developmental Disorders

For all students

Addressing the Challenges

The personal challenges of students with an autism spectrum disorder can be supported in both home and school environments by incorporating some of the following strategies into daily routines and practices. Specific strategies must be determined according to the individual strengths and needs of the child.

Strategies to Assist Social Challenges:

- Directly teach group skills – turn taking, listening, and attending
- Directly teach about emotions and feelings
- Model and provide frequent opportunities for practice
- Use Social Stories
- Use student strengths and interests for motivating
- Provide positive and frequent rewards

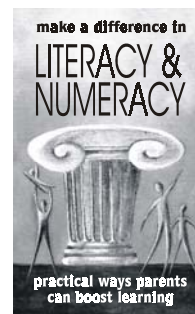
Strategies to Reduce Communication Barriers:

- Use visual cues (gestures, photos, PCS, etc.) to accompany all verbal instructions
- Use simple, clear language that avoids slang or abstract terms
- Limit use of questions, make comments
- Ignore repetitive echolalia speech
- When in doubt – write it out
- Provide positive and frequent rewards

Strategies to Reduce Ritualistic Behaviours:

- Determine the why of the behaviour
- Accommodate the environment to the needs of the child (sensory considerations)
- Directly teach replacement behaviours
- Directly teach transition behaviours

- Structure a preferred activity after a required activity
- Provide positive and frequent rewards



Supporting Independence:

Providing students with the following supports will assist in fostering independence and reducing anxiety.

- Provide structure wherever and whenever possible
- Model desirable actions in a structured and explicit fashion. It is important to be very specific and prescriptive.
- Use multiple visual supports:
 - body language – teach the meaning
 - natural environmental cues such as signs, furniture arrangements, concrete items
 - organizational tools such as calendars, schedules, signs, maps, recipes, lists
 - use choice boards to teach decision making, responsibility and independence
 - use symbols that represent quiet and noisy, allowed choices, out of bounds, etc.
- Reward, reward reward!

Communicating with the School

Effective communication between home and school is critical to the success of all children, but is particularly so for the child with special needs. Be sure to share critical information with the school, addressing such issues as:

- strengths, interests, learning style
- aspects of your child's behaviour that could interfere with the learning process
- strategies that you have found to be successful with your child

- his/her fears/ anxieties/distractions
- environmental or sensory considerations
- how he or she calms self
- specific concerns or desires for your child

Daily communication informs each party of the needs of the child and the events of his day and evening. It provides teachers and parents with topics of conversation that are relevant to the “here and now” for the child. Questions and answers that may be shared between the two environments each day will be determined individually but may include:

- What did she do?
- Where did he go?
- What did she play? With anyone?
- What did he eat?
- Were there changes to routine? Visitors?
- What time was bedtime? How did she sleep?

The communication may take several forms, including the use of a daily journal, communication book, visual schedule marked with bingo dabbers, or selected cards representing activities. It is very important to involve the child in the daily communication process in both the home and school environment.

Related web sites

Autism Society Ontario
<http://www.autismsociety.on.ca/>

Ministry of Education Special Education
<http://www.gov.on.ca/mbs/english/index.html>

Geneva Centre for Autism
<http://www.autism.net/index.html>

Kerry's Place Autism Services
<http://www.kerrysplace.com>

Division TEACCH
<http://www.teach.com/>

The Hanen Centre
<http://www.hanen.org/Hanen2002/frames.htm>

BBB Autism Online Support Network

<http://www.bbbautism.com/>

Parentbooks
<http://www.parentbookstore.com/>

ASD Resource Titles

Asperger Syndrome: a Guide for Parents and Professionals.
 Tony Attwood

Teaching Children with Autism: Strategies to Enhance Communication and Socialization.
 Kathleen Ann Quill

Do-Watch-Listen-Say: Social and Communication Intervention for Children with Autism.
 Kathleen Ann Quill

Meeting the Needs of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
 Rita Jordan and Glenys Jones

Understanding the Nature of Autism: A Practical Guide.
 Janice Janzen

Educational Provision for Children with Autism and Asperger Syndrome: meeting their needs.
 Glenys Jones

Asperger Syndrome and Your Child: a Parent's Guide.
 Michael Power and Janet Poland

Children with Autism: a Parents' Guide, 2nd Edition.
 Michael Power (ed)

Teaching Play Skills to Children with ASD: A Practical Guide.
 Melinda J. Smith

The above resources are all available for purchase from Parentbooks, Toronto.

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