

Program Development and Implementation of Recreational Drama Classes for
Youth with Complex Disabilities

By

Walter Riley Braem

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Stephani Etheridge Woodson, Chair
Johnny Saldaña
Erika Elizabeth Hughes

Arizona State University

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ABSTRACT

This applied project discusses program development and implementation of recreational drama classes for individuals with complex disabilities. This work is based on my experiences as a teaching artist with special needs populations at Theatre Works in Peoria, Arizona and First Stage Children's Theatre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and my experience as a volunteer at a camp for mentally and physically disabled adults held at Land Between the Lakes in Dover, Tennessee. This project explores what complex disabilities are, program development, participant and teaching artist selection, and resources for participants and teaching artists.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Through this applied project, I intend to contribute to the creation of recreational drama programs offered by theatre for young audiences (TYA) companies for youth with complex disabilities. I delve into this intricate world first exploring what complex disabilities are and the characteristics one may have with such a diagnosis. Then I share my thoughts on recreational drama program development followed by participant and teaching artist selection and teaching artist and participant resources.

What are complex disabilities and how does drama fit into the picture? This was not a question I had ever thought about until I arrived at Arizona State University (ASU) in 2010. While I have worked with special needs populations since 1996 and in the field of TYA for many years, I never considered how these two important aspects of my life could intersect. I am passionate about the work that I do with youth. In my work as an Artist I have striven to create innovative and unique theatrical experiences that allowed participants to explore and stretch their imaginations. I have also worked to open up and make available all possible channels of creative expression so the young people I have worked with had the opportunity to explore, create, and grow as artists.

When I was 13, my family moved from Chicago, Illinois to Drakesboro, a small rural town in Kentucky. Despite the culture shock of moving from the third largest city in the United States to a small town with a population of 600, I was able to grow artistically through my involvement in arts programs offered by my school and the local community theatre (Muhlenberg Community Theatre, Inc.

[MCTI]) in nearby Greenville, Kentucky. In addition to performing with my school choir, concert band, and marching band during my high school years, I also acted in MCTI's theatre for youth by youth productions.

My work with special needs populations began shortly after I moved from Chicago. A friend of mine told me about a camp for mentally and physically disabled adults that she volunteered for during the summer. It sounded like fun so I sent in an application, and in the summer of 1996, I served my first year as a counselor for Camp MARC. At the time I had no idea what I was getting myself into, but one thing I am certain of is how the experience changed my life completely. The summer of 2012 was the 50th anniversary of Camp MARC and my 17th year as a staff member.

Fast forward to August 2010 to the beginning of my graduate school career as a Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Theatre for Youth student at ASU. I happened upon an article in *American Theatre* entitled "Full Spectrum Access" (Loer 82-87). The article mentioned how several theatre artists were using theatre and drama to help individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) learn social interaction skills, as well a theatre company in Texas whose ensemble is made up of physically and mentally disabled individuals. I had an ah-ha moment. My passion since that time has been to find innovative techniques and explore diverse models combining theatre practices with an emphasis on individuals with *complex disabilities*. The document you now hold distills my past three years of graduate study together with my multiple year experiences working with special populations. While not exhaustive, this applied project presents both

recommendations for program development along with a sample curriculum I developed and delivered at First Stage Children's Theatre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

CHAPTER 2: COMPLEX DISABILITIES, AN OVERVIEW

Before we continue I need to define, explain, and explore the terms *Complex Disability*, *Profound Disability*, and *Autism Spectrum Disorder*. First, let me say that the definition of the terms *complex disability* and *profound disability* vary greatly depending on discipline and location. For the purposes of this document I define *complex disability* and *profound disability* as follows:

Complex Disability: Individuals who have conditions that co-exist. These conditions overlap and interlock creating a complex profile. These individuals present with a range of issues and combination of layered needs—e.g., mental health, relationships, behavioral, physical, medical, sensory, communication, and cognitive. (Project Information).

Profound Disabilities: Individuals exhibit profound developmental discrepancies in cognition, communication, social skills development, mobility, and self help skills; includes people with profound mental retardation. (Sternberg).

Given that the definition of *profound disability* includes people with profound mental retardation I further need to define *mental retardation*.

According to the DSM-IV¹ “the essential feature of Mental Retardation is significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning that is accompanied by significant limitations in adaptive functioning in at least two of the following skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of

¹ The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) is the standard classification of mental disorders used by mental health professionals in the United States. For more information about the DSM please visit: <http://www.psychiatry.org/practice/dsm>

community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, health, and safety (39).

When speaking to the degrees of severity of Mental Retardation the DSM-IV lists four degrees of severity reflecting the level of intellectual impairment: Mild, Moderate, Severe, and Profound.

Table 1:

Degrees of Severity of Mental Retardation

Code	Diagnoses	Description
317	Mild Mental Retardation:	IQ level 50-55 to approx. 70
318.0	Moderate Mental Retardation:	IQ level 35-40 to 50-55
318.1	Severe Mental Retardation:	IQ level 20-25 to 35-40
318.2	Profound Mental Retardation:	IQ level below 20 or 25

Source: *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. (DSM-IV 40)

While the term *mental retardation* is, for the time being, a medically appropriate term, I prefer to use the term *Intellectual Disability*. Intellectually Disabled does not carry the negative societal attachments that the word *retarded* does.

The commonality among the above terms is that they are all developmental disabilities. According to the Center for Disease Control, Developmental Disabilities are a diverse group of severe chronic conditions due to mental and/or physical impairments. People with developmental disabilities have problems with major life activities such as language, mobility, learning, self-

help, and independent living (CDC). This covers a wide range of disabilities encompassing not only physical disabilities but genetic and learning disabilities as well.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a specific group of neurological (developmental) disabilities that can cause social, communication, and behavioral challenges. There is a saying in the autism community: “if you’ve met one person with autism you’ve met one person with autism.” I am not sure of the origins of this quote but I have heard it time and time again and it is absolutely true. ASD is a spectrum disorder: each person is affected in a different way ranging from very mild to severe.

ASD is characterized as a triad of impairments in the areas of socialization, communication, and ritualistic behavior, and within the spectrum there are different subgroups with various developmental profiles (Quill 1, Aspy & Grossman 6-10, McCoy 3, and DSM-IV). ASD consists of the following subgroups:

Autistic Disorder (commonly called “classic” autism)

People with autistic disorder usually have significant language delays, social and communication challenges, and unusual behaviors and interests.

Asperger Syndrome (AS) (sometimes referred to as High Functioning Autism [HFA])

People with AS usually have some milder symptoms of autistic disorder.

Challenges in social skills and unusual behavior or interests might be

present but problems with language or *intellectual disabilities* are typically not present.

Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS also called “atypical autism”)

People with PDD-NOS may meet some of the criteria for autistic disorder or Asperger Syndrome but not all. These individuals usually have fewer and milder symptoms than those with autistic disorder (CDC).

While there are other diagnoses that would place an individual on the spectrum (Rett Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, and Fragile X Syndrome) most will fall under the subgroup of PDD-NOS (Rapoport and Ismond 77 and CDC).

While any of the above mentioned disorders can produce a challenge for theatre practitioners, individuals with ASD and other complex disabilities often present with characteristics positioning theatre as an unlikely candidate for recreational activity. Aspy & Grossman list the following associated features that may be present in individuals with ASD: sensory differences, cognitive differences, motor differences; and emotional vulnerability (15). While these areas are vast I feel it is important to talk about some of the characteristics in each².

Associated Features

Sensory Differences. Abnormalities in processing incoming sensations such as sight, smell, sound, touch, taste, pain, and temperature are experienced by 70 to 80% of the ASD population (Aspy & Grossman 15). Sensory sensitivity can make

² These characteristics may also be present in individuals with other complex disabilities.

even the most basic day to day activities difficult. Individuals can have either a hypersensitivity³ or hyposensitivity⁴ to any of the sensory items listed above which can cause a number of undesired behaviors. Aspy & Grossman tell us that common sensory differences may include:

- Unusual response to sounds (ignores sounds or overreacts to sounds)
- Unusual response to pain (overreacts or seems unaware of illness or injury)
- Unusual response to taste (sensitive to textures and flavors)
- Unusual response to light or color (focuses on shiny things, reflections, shadows, and may display a strong attraction or dislike for a certain color)
- Unusual response to smells (may have a keen sense of smell, may comment on smells that others do not detect)
- Unusual response to touch (may either seek out activities that provide touch, pressure, or movement or the individual may avoid activities that provide touch, pressure, or movement). (16)

Cognitive Differences. Individuals on the spectrum show a wide range of cognitive abilities. While some may have notable cognitive delays many have IQs in the gifted range. Aspy & Grossman report that it is also estimated that savant characteristics⁵ occur in as many as one third of individuals on the spectrum (16). Individuals on the spectrum may also test as a gifted individual with very

³ Individuals who are Hypersensitive have a high level of sensitivity to physical stimuli and may be easily overwhelmed by too much information.

⁴ Individuals who are Hyposensitive have a low level of sensitivity to physical stimuli and may not react to stimuli in an appropriate way. For example, an individual may place their hand on a hot burner and not react to this stimulus immediately and as a result would burn his/her hand.

advanced skills in some areas and test at an average or below average rate in others (McCoy 202).

Aspy & Grossman list the following common cognitive difference that may include:

- Displays extensive knowledge in narrow areas of interest
- Displays poor problem solving skills
- Displays weakness in reading comprehension despite strong word recognition ability
- Has difficulty applying learned skills in new settings
- Has difficulty understanding the connection between behavior and resulting consequences
- Recalls information inconsistently. (17)

Motor Differences. Individuals on the spectrum may show motor differences before social and communications differences have the opportunity to manifest (Aspy & Grossman 18). The motor differences experienced by these individuals may also affect things that are learned through movement.

Aspy & Grossman go onto list Common Motor Differences that may include:

- Difficulties with balance
- Poor handwriting
- Poor motor coordination (may be accident prone)
- Walks with an awkward gait

⁵ A Savant is a person who has an unusual gift, outstanding skill, or knowledge above their ability level and the general population. Like ASD savant skills come in a spectrum: splinter, talented, and prodigious. More information can be found at http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Autistic_savant

- Displays unusual body postures and movements or facial expressions. (18)

Emotional Vulnerability. Individuals with ASD not only have a hard time understanding and showing empathy to others, they also have a difficult time negotiating their own emotions. These individuals can be faced with a number of emotional vulnerabilities. When attempting to cope with stress, individuals may experience a “neurological storm” also described as rages or tantrums.

Aspy & Grossman list common emotional differences that may include:

- Easily stressed or worried
- Injures self (picks, bangs head, bites nails, bites self)
- Has difficulty tolerating mistakes
- Has low self-esteem
- Has difficulty identifying, quantifying, expressing, and /or controlling emotions
- Has a limited understanding of own and others’ emotional responses. (19)

Prevalence

The Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported in their most recent update that about 11.3 per 1,000 or 1 in 88 children has been identified with an autism spectrum disorder. This number is up from 6.7 per 1,000 or 1 in 150 in the year 2000 (CDC). There are many speculations as to why the prevalence has increased so much but the cause of the increase is still unknown.

Giving the prevalence rates for individuals with developmental disorders is difficult because there are so many disorders included in the count. For example, learning disabilities such as dyslexia, attention deficit/hyperactivity

disorder (ADHD), and blindness are also included in the census. According to the article, “Trends in Prevalence of Developmental Disabilities in US Children, 1997 – 2008” developmental disabilities are common and an estimated 1 in 6 children in the United States in 2006-2008 were reported to have a developmental disability (Boyle et al 1034). The study went on to note that the prevalence of developmental disorders had increased 17.1% or about 1.8 million, from 2006-2008 compared to 13.87% between the years 1997-2008 (Boyle et al 1036-37).

These numbers are high. Statistically then, we all know someone with some kind of developmental disability. Our drama studios, classrooms, and rehearsal halls contain individuals, both diagnosed and not, who have some kind of developmental disability. Our challenge is to let this information inform the design and implementation of recreational drama classes for individuals who present one of the many disabilities discussed above. For the purposes for this applied project, I will use the term *complex disability* to further explore the design and implementation of recreational drama classes for this collective of developmental disabilities.

CHAPTER 3: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

When developing programming for individuals with complex disabilities, I ask you to remember one guiding principle: EVERY child deserves the opportunity to take part in the arts. Our responsibility as artists and educators is necessarily then to provide access to anyone who wants to explore the world of drama. This basic principle should drive the development of every recreational drama program of course, not only ones for special needs communities. So what is it about drama that is so helpful for individuals in these special populations? The answer is clear. As Guli, Wilkinson, and Semrud-Clikeman point out, “the essence of drama is social interaction, which involves contact, communication, and the negotiation of meaning within a group context,” and that through creative drama children have the “opportunity to develop imagination, think independently, cooperate with others, build social awareness, learn to take others’ perspectives into account, and improve habits of speech” (3-4). In my experience, drama has offered individuals with complex disabilities ways and means to explore and interact with each other. I feel that drama allows these individuals the ability to interact with each other in an invisibly structured way that affords them the ability to take risks and explore.

Class Structure

The structure of your program will depend on your overall goals for that program. Some programs might want to work toward full inclusion of individuals with a complex disability into a class of typically developing peers, while others might want to focus on classes for this specific community only. Both models

have merit. Likewise, you should know participants' individual goals; one child may want to "advance" to a recreational class for typically developing youth, while that level of integration might be uncomfortable for another child. Inclusion as a philosophy is wonderful, but should be balanced with the goals of individual students.

No matter what model, class size has direct implications for programming success. Class size needs to be kept to a minimum for multiple reasons. First, the more participants there are the less time the teaching artist is able to spend working with each participant individually. Second, the more participants there are the more time it takes to complete an activity. Lastly, there is no way to ensure that one teaching artist can assess and provide for the needs of 40 individuals with complex disabilities.

While working with the One Step Beyond class at Theater Works in Peoria, Arizona I was challenged in multiple ways. One of the challenges was a class of 40 individuals with a wide range of complex disabilities. There were also individuals who were nonverbal and others with limited mobility. In addition to the 40 participants there were also 13-15 coaches⁶ that were also part of the ensemble. While these coaches were there to assist me with keeping the participants focused during class, it was difficult to communicate with such a large group and of course, the number of participants affected how long activities lasted.

The goal of One Step Beyond was to create a 30-minute devised musical. I was also charged with the task of integrating the coaches into the performance

⁶ While I use the term "coaches" the organization used the term "handlers".

piece. While these additional hands were a priceless asset, a total of 55 individuals for one teaching artist and an intern to organize in a productive way was quite a challenge. As a consequence, participants were not afforded equitable portions of my time and attention in class. There were also moments when participants lost focus due to how long activities took to complete.

Given that most recreational drama classes will run between 60-90 minutes (day long classes and camps excluded) I feel that it is in the best interest of the participants you are serving to keep the class size small (between 8-10 participants). Once again, the capacity of the class will again depend on the model that you select for your program.

Typically Developing Peers – Where Do They Fit In?

The integration between the two populations is a delicate process and can be just as taxing on typically developing peers as it is on those with complex disabilities. Typically developing youth might feel apprehensive about working with youth with disabilities. Many may not have any exposure to youth with complex disabilities and need to be educated about the issues facing special needs populations in social settings. Providing a basic understanding of these issues can make the difference between acceptance and further isolation. Despite the delicate nature of integration between the two populations, utilizing typically developing youth as peer models can yield wonderful results.

Peer Models. One option would be to have typically developing youth serve as peer models for the other participants. Just as the interaction between participant and facilitator can influence the performance of the participant, interactions between peers influence outcomes. The use of a peer model is an

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)⁷ antecedent control⁸ technique called modeling. Peer models can have a powerful effect on behavior if the following guidelines are followed: “First, make sure that student you want others to model is indeed someone they like and admire. Second, make sure the student you select as a model is praised for appropriate behavior in the presence of others. Finally, make sure your students are capable of performing the behavior being demonstrated by the model.” (Schloss and Smith 71).

The peer model a facilitator selects must be familiar with the structure of the recreational drama class in which they will be a peer model. Peer models should have empathy, a willingness to help others and, most importantly, a love for play and drama. I suggest facilitators and the theatres hosting this type of class structure have an application process for peer models. Part of this application process should be a social skills survey. This survey would be completed by the potential peer model’s classroom teacher and not his or her parent. Nashville Children’s Theatre (NCT) in Nashville, Tennessee has a wonderful social skills survey for their program that asks questions about the level of interaction they have with classmates, their interest in helping others, and questions about their behavior in the classroom.⁹ An example of a question on NCT’s survey is, “How much interest in helping others does this student show?” and “ How well does this

⁷ ABA is the science in which tactics derived from the principles of behavior are applied to improve socially significant behavior and experimentation is used to identify the variables responsible for the improvement in behavior (Cooper, Heron, & Heward 20).

⁸ An antecedent control is an event that precedes a behavior and influences the probability that it will recur in the future (Schloss and Smith 54).

⁹ A sample of Nashville Children’s Theatre’s Social Skills Survey can be found in the appendix or by visiting their website at: http://www.nashvillechildrenstheatre.org/camp_asd.htm

student interact with classmates?” I find this to be a good example of questions you might want to ask of a potential peer model.

Training Peer Models. Once peer models are selected they should be informed of the issues and concerns that these individuals might have in social settings. It is also important to check in and communicate with the peer models before and after each class. Also, setting the expectation that, while they will be helping their peers, it is important for them to have fun and to fully participate in the class as well. It would also be wise to talk to the parents of the participants so that they know what the class will be like. In fact, I suggest requiring both peer models and their parent(s) to attend peer model training.

Siblings as Peer Models. Siblings can be an attractive option to use as peer models for these classes. They know the likes and dislikes of the individual, and are typically well versed in the coping strategies used by the individual, and can help identify potential triggers that might cause tantrums or meltdowns. Bass and Mulick point out that “family members have trained typically developing siblings to persistently engage in social overtures toward their siblings...this home-based intervention has resulted in increases in positive initiations and responses, as well as concurrent social behaviors” (732). In essence, typically developing siblings serve in an unofficial therapeutic capacity simply because they are the sibling of an individual with a complex disability.

This can have negative effects as well. Siblings can be protective in social situations. At the same time they may be overly critical of their siblings. Additionally, siblings may feel that they need to take action and correct behaviors

they deem inappropriate. The emotional relationship between sibling pairs is a huge factor on whether or not siblings would be a good peer model fit in the recreational drama class. When I was at First Stage in Milwaukee, Wisconsin teaching one of their Next Steps classes for youth with ASD we had a sibling join us as an intern. While this young man did not specifically serve as a peer model, the interaction was ideal. He fully participated and served as an example for all participants in the class. The ability for him to let his brother explore and take risks without intervening was paramount in his success as an intern and his brother's success in the class.

Little research exists that explores the dynamics of sibling relationships when one sibling has a disability (Carter 5). It is difficult to know if the typically developing sibling is serving in this capacity because he/she truly wants to, as was the case with the sibling in the above example, or if they are being told to do so by their parents. As teaching artists we must remember that our priority is creating a safe and productive place for all our students to explore. A sibling thrust into an undesired role is not productive. Not to mention, siblings serve as peer models every day and sometimes need a break. I believe in balancing advocacy for all the participants, even if that means telling parents that their children cannot serve as a peer model in a sibling's class.

Inclusive Model

If you wish to design an inclusive program, I suggest creating a program that both scaffolds skills and alters the demographics of the classroom. This model works toward full inclusion as an end goal and would involve three stages with stage three being a “regular” recreational drama class. In this model,

participants can advance from stage to stage based on assessments of participants' growth by the teaching artist (or theatre education staff), parent(s) and, most importantly, the participants themselves. Some participants will need to repeat a stage of the program and this is acceptable. Every individual will start at a different ability level and, in order to assure that they are ready to advance, we must evaluate each participant individually.

Assessment. Advancement should be determined by individual growth. Individual growth should be the driving force behind advancement from stage to stage, and that can only be determined once you know the individuals you will be working with. It can be difficult to explain success in the drama class to those who are not familiar with what we do there. Both those "a-ha" moments of discovery and the gradual acquisition of skills throughout the course of a class are representative of what true success looks like. These are hard to quantify and are perhaps creative capacity rather than "skill."

Below you will find brief outlines of the three stages of a program that I feel would be an effective inclusion model. For this model I think that a smaller class would be best in the first two stages. I suggest 8-10 participants with two teaching artists.

Stage One:

Program Goal:	Number of Youth with Complex Disability	Number of Typically Developing Youth
To introduce basic drama skills and allow for adequate social interaction with typically developing peers. ¹⁰	6-7	2-3

This stage is important because it gives individuals who may have never been in a drama class time to acclimate to their new environment. In this stage we build basic drama skills with the participants, like:

- Pantomime and movement: Use gestures and movement to tell a story.
- Narrative: Telling a story vocally using language.
- Improvisation: Involves thinking on your feet to create work individually or as a group.
- Tableaux: A still image that can be used to tell a story with no movement or sound.
- Role play: Taking on the role of someone else.
- Games: Are used to help develop skills and to build group cohesion.
- Voice: Working to develop the voice as an instrument.
- Use of scripts: Begin working with the idea of bringing the words of others to life through mime, movement, and voice.

¹⁰ Typically Developing Peers in Stages One and Two of the Inclusion Model should be carefully selected Peer Models.

- Ground rules: Basic rules in the drama class such as working together as an ensemble, speaking with clear and articulated diction, and taking turns.

In this stage it is also important to allow participants significant time to work individually and with peers. The number of peer models you have in your class will also dictate the ways you can group participants. Because this model utilizes peers as models when placing participants in groups, you will want to have at least one peer model in each group.

Johnny Saldaña, professor of theatre at Arizona State University, gives some wonderful grouping advice in his text *Drama of Color: Improvisation with Multiethnic Folklore*. For this stage I would use the following groupings that Saldaña suggests:

- **Solo Work:** Each student plays a specific character from a story with a large number of characters, or a different role in a complex improvisation.
- **Pair Playing (a.k.a. Play Buddies¹¹):** Each student works with a partner in a two-character improvisation or scene; pairs work simultaneously while the teacher sidecoaches; provides maximum participation for all ages.
- **Small Groups of Three to Five:** Students work together on very specific assigned dramatic tasks or roles. (8-10)

These groupings would allow participants to work individually and begin to work with individuals in dramatic play. I would also suggest some simple drama structures from *Structuring Drama Work: A Handbook of Available Forms in*

¹¹ The Ziggurat Model provides two types of arrangements when concerning peer interactions. They are play buddies and integrated play groups.

Theatre and Drama by Jonothan Neelands and Tony Goode. Keep in mind that many individuals with *complex disabilities*, especially those with ASD, lack skills in social interaction, empathy, and communication (both verbal and interpretation of body language), and these structures are all ones that can help a teaching artist explore those deficits. For this stage I would suggest the following drama structures:

A. Context-Building Action

- a. **Defining Space:** Available material and furniture is used to ‘accurately’ represent the place where a drama is happening.
 - i. **Learning Opportunities:** Using available resources imaginatively; negotiating the way a place should look; representing meanings spatially; encouraging belief in the fiction by working to elaborate it; reflecting on relationships between context and action.
- b. **Still-Image:** Groups devise an image using their own bodies to crystallize a moment, idea, or theme.
 - i. **Learning Opportunities:** Highly selective way of crystallizing meaning into concrete images, a very economical and controlled form of expression as well as a sign to be interpreted or read by observers; groups are able to represent more than they would be able to communicate through words alone.

B. Narrative Action

- a. **A Day in the Life:** This convention works backwards from an important event in order to fill in the gaps in the history of how the characters have arrived at the event.
 - i. Learning Opportunities: Drawing attention to the influences, and exposing the forces, which drive a character to a moment of conflict or decision; emphasizing how inner conflicts and tensions shape the events and circumstances of the narrative.
- b. **Overheard Conversations:** These conversations add tension or information to a situation that should not have been heard.
 - i. Learning Opportunities: Devising/interpreting conversations that are relevant; speculating on the significance of what is heard; considering the truth of rumor; adding tension and secrecy as motivation within a situation.

C. Poetic Action

- a. **Alter-Ego:** In this convention, essentially an extension of Thought-Tracking, students work in pairs, one as the character and one as the character's thoughts. The double's function is to provide a commentary of 'inner speech', focusing thoughts and feelings against which the protagonist plays out their surface action and dialogue as though their alter-ego was not there.

- i. **Learning Opportunities:** This convention is designed to deepen the collective understanding of the ways a character might be feeling in a given situation even though the character might not be able publicly to admit or express those feelings.
- b. **Behind the Scene:** A private or intimate scene is played against the background of larger social and historical events.
 - i. **Learning Opportunities:** Understanding the relationship between private and public events; putting events into a social and historical perspective. (Neelands and Goode 9-93)

Of course these drama structures are just some examples of what you could use for this stage.

Stage Two:

Program Goal:	Number of Youth with Complex Disability	Number of Typically Developing Youth
To continue building on the drama structure foundation that was laid in stage one of the program, and to continue to build community via social interaction with typically developing peers.	2-3	6-7

This stage is important because it allows youth to continue building confidence and become more comfortable working with others in the context of the drama classroom. In this stage it is important to build upon the basic drama skills that you introduced to participants in stage one (pantomime and movement, narrative, improvisation, tableaux, role play, games, voice, use of scripts, and ground rules). This stage flips the ratio of youth with complex disabilities and typically developing youth.

For this stage I would use the following groupings as suggested by Saldaña:

- **Small Groups of Three to Five:** Students work together on very specific assigned dramatic tasks or roles.
- **Split Half:** Students are divided into two large groups with each group playing a particular character or taking a “side.”
- **Ensemble:** All students play the same character or work on the same action simultaneously; the teacher sidecoaches and/or plays in role; provides maximum participation for all ages. (8-10)

These group arrangements would allow for participants to begin working in larger groups where they have to negotiate working in an ensemble. Some drama structures that I would suggest for this level, once again pulled from Neelands and Goode, are:

A. Context-Building Action:

- a. **Collective Character:** A character is improvised by a group of students, any one of whom can speak as the character.

- i. **Learning Opportunities:** Requires participants to work sensitively and collectively; sharing a role through alternative portrayals; tests out character responses in action; helps provide a more complex character for further exploration.
- b. **Simulations:** Life events are simulated in such a way as to emphasize management of resources, decision-taking, problem-solving, institutional management.
 - i. **Learning Opportunities:** Problems presented within contexts that require group decision-making and problem-solving; structured but encourages identification with the problem.

B. Narrative Action:

- a. **Mantle of the Expert:** The group becomes characters endowed with specialist knowledge that is relevant to the situation.
 - i. **Learning Opportunities:** Power and responsibility move from teacher/leader to group.
- b. **Tag Role:** As in tag wrestling the participants in an improvisation can be tagged or appeal to be tagged (hand held out, palm upwards) and thereby be replaced in that improvisation by another group member.

- i. Learning Opportunities: Participants must accept rules; requires sensitivity and trust; collective responsibility for the construction of narrative.

C. Poetic Action:

- a. **Play within a Play:** Characters in a drama perform a clearly defined and designed performance event within the context of a wider dramatic fiction.
 - i. Learning Opportunities: Layering of roles; selecting and crafting meaning from a frame perspective; representing meanings through appropriate selection of form.
- b. **Role-Reversal:** Roles are reversed as part of the action of the drama.
 - i. Learning Opportunities: Actively exploring demands and tensions presented by a future situation; way of demonstrating hypotheses about human behavior and reactions. (9-93)

These suggested drama structures provide opportunities for social interaction, practicing empathy, and interpreting verbal and non-verbal communication. Again, when working with individuals with complex disabilities, the key to success is adaptability and knowing the group of individuals with whom you are working.

Stage Three: Stage three is a fully integrated recreational drama class.

The class demographic would be dependent on the enrollment boundaries set for

the class. The ratio of typically developing youth to youth with a complex disability would not be predetermined.

The inclusive model would allow for a controlled interaction between typically developing peers and those with complex disabilities. This model utilizes what is called an Integrated Play Group. “The integrated play groups model, which features the use of typically developing peers and adult guidance, might best be described as ‘adult facilitated peer mediation’”(Wolfberg and Schuler 42). This controlled level of interaction between the two groups of youth allows a facilitator to continuously monitor and adjust the ensemble to ensure that the interaction between the two student groups is effective. It is also just like any recreational drama class that a teaching artist would teach. Consequently, the integrated play group model is ideal because it “offer[s] children with autism and related special needs ongoing opportunities to participate in play with more competent, typically developing peers in natural settings, such as homes, integrated school sites, after-school programmes, recreational centres, and neighborhood parks” (Woldberg and Schuler 42).

Non-Inclusive Model

A non-inclusive model also has benefits. In the first two stages of the above inclusive model typically developing youth serve as peer models for youth with complex disabilities. In a non-inclusive model there would be no peer models and the class would consist only of individuals with complex disabilities. While I feel there are benefits to using typically developing youth as peer models, I do have some concerns about their use in the drama classroom.

One concern of peer modeling relationships in the drama classroom is the question of how that relationship translates to the outside world. If a typically developing child serving as a peer model happens to go to the same school as a student with ASD, how will that relationship work in the school environment? One of my primary concerns is when participants with a complex disability interact and receive the amount of attention from these peer models in the drama classroom, what will be the effect if that relationship and level of interaction is not reciprocated in outside settings like the halls or classrooms of a school? While I would like to say that the individuals selected as peer models would treat participants the same in and out of the drama class, one cannot be certain that this will be the case.

Another item to consider is whether or not inclusion benefits the participant. Some youth might not feel comfortable interacting with typically developing peers. In other cases, parents might not be ready to take that step and place their child in an environment with typically developing students. In cases where you elect to use a non-inclusive model, I would suggest class sizes of 6-8 individuals. In lieu of peer models, I would suggest a higher student-teacher ratio. This can be accomplished by having one or two “lead” teaching artists and one to three teaching assistants or interns.

When working within any model, a functional class is a priority. If there is only one teaching artist and a child experiences a neurological storm (tantrum), then the entire class comes to a standstill while the facilitator attends to the one

child. If there are multiple individuals then the class can continue while facilitators divide and conquer.

The design for this class would be like any other class you would teach. You could use the structures from above or you could follow your own design. The important thing to keep in mind is that whatever you do be prepared to adapt to fit the needs of the group in the moment.

Adaptability

The key to working with individuals with complex disabilities is adaptability. As a teaching artist you must be able to adapt your session and/or activities to work for the students you are working with, not against them. We adapt theatre activities all the time when we work with youth. In my work at First Stage there were times when my sessions/activities deviated from the “plan” that I had designed. Sometimes the change is small but other times you might need to redesign your session and go in a different direction.

One of the warm-up activities I did with my students at First Stage was the BrainDance. This is a wonderful activity that warms both the body and mind up. One day I went into my Next Steps 2 (NS2)¹² class and they were all over the place. They were hyper, loud, and literally jumping off the walls. We circled up and immediately I knew that I needed to do something to focus them or the next hour would be a long one. I went over to the lights and turned them off to let the natural light from the windows be our lighting source. I then asked them to cover the space keeping soft focus and to concentrate on their breathing. Next, I told

¹² The program for ASD youth at First Stage Children’s Theatre was called Next Steps. There were two classes in this program, NS1 and NS2. The classes were separated by age. NS1 classes were ages 12-14 and NS2 were ages 14-18.

them I was going to count down from five, and when I got to one I wanted them to stop and stand quietly. Once everyone was stopped I instructed them to lie down on their backs (telling them of course to listen to their bodies and to do what they were comfortable with) while keeping their eyes closed.

I now had the class in a quiet starting position. I adjusted my tone and told them that today we were going to do the BrainDance¹³ a little differently than we normally do it. I then went through the first seven steps of the BrainDance, breath, tactile, core-distal, head-tail, upper-lower, body-side, and cross-lateral, and had them slowly make their way to a standing position. The last step of the BrainDance, vestibular, was omitted that day because if we had done this portion of the activity it would have negated the calming work that we just accomplished. After we completed this portion of the warm-up the students were quiet, focused, and ready to work.

Another instance when I had to adapt my session design was for the main activity that my NS2 class was going to share at the end of camp with their family, friends, and peers. The original idea was to have them either do an excerpt from a show called *Governing Alice* (a modern retelling of Antigone by Sophocles) by C. Denby Swanson, or a number from Barry Kornahuser's unpublished work, *Wiley and the Hairy Man*. When we reviewed these works in class the older students (NS1) gravitated towards the excerpt of *Governing Alice*, but the NS2 class was not impressed by either of these options. We talked about what might work in class but we could not come to a consensus.

¹³ More information about the BrainDance will be provided later in the chapter.

That night I went back to my hotel room and I looked over my notes and our information sheets¹⁴ on all the students, desperate to find something that would work. There were so many things to take into consideration, specific interests of each individual, sensory stimulation (loud noises were an issue with this group), and how I could utilize each of their skills and meld them into something that we could share with everyone at the end of the week. Then it came to me. I was in Milwaukee in early August and the hot news topic at this time was the Republican National Convention. Wanting to stay in the know, I was watching it on television with the closed captioning on. At some point I muted the TV to focus more on figuring out what I was going to do so these kids had something to share. In my frustration, I put all of these papers aside so I could take a break. I looked up at the television and there it was: the Republican National Convention still on with closed captioning running. A silent movie. I was going to make a silent movie with the NS2 group, but would it work?

I had a student who loved trains, another who loved heroes, yet another who loved scary suspenseful movies, and a very talented pianist. It all worked. This was perfect – it allowed me to appeal to everyone in the class through their special interests and compensated for the sensory issues found within this group. At the end of the week we had a group of train passengers who were threatened by the evil Romanov but saved by Mr. Terrific. To make this even better, one of my students underscored the action of our sharing by playing Beethoven's 5th on the piano.

¹⁴ Information sheet information can be found in the section about Teaching Artists Resources.

Both of these instances are examples of adapting the session design and making it work for the students and not against them. While these examples might seem like big changes, here are some other things you can do:

- Remember that you might have to repeat yourself and this is not because they are not paying attention.
- If you set a schedule follow it, and if you must deviate explain why you are doing things differently.
- Finally, roll with it. Don't let little things get to you. If you appear frustrated or upset it can cause a negative experience for all involved.

Remember that adaptability is only part of the equation. Teaching artists must be prepared, experienced, and comfortable working in an environment that can appear both lax and hyper-structured.

Curriculum

When people ask me how I teach classes for individuals with complex disabilities I simply tell them, “the same way that I teach a class for typically developing individuals” and I often receive a very perplexed look. When working with special populations, remember your role as teaching artist and teach. Chris Hamby, Director of Outreach Programming at Theater Works in Peoria, Arizona, shared a great piece of advice he received from Madison Rogers, Program Development Officer of One Step Beyond, Inc. in Peoria, Arizona, when Hamby first developed classes for special populations. Hamby confided, “In our very very initial meeting, she said teach this class like you would teach any other class” (Hamby).

Like many teaching artists, the first thing I do before I step foot in a class is write a session design. If you are like me you may start with an outline of what you will cover over the course of your class. Below you will find the outline for my week long class at First Stage Children's Theatre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Following you will find a detailed session design for the first of five classes.

First Stage Children's Theatre Next Steps Program Outline

27 August-31 August

- I. Monday
 - a. Introductions and a Name game
 - b. Warm-ups
 - i. Body Warm-up
 - 1. BrainDance
 - 2. Down and Up
 - ii. Vocal Warm-up
 - 1. Bow and Arrow
 - 2. Flee Fly!
 - iii. Body and Voice Warm-up
 - 1. Ai O Dee Aye
 - c. Process
 - i. Discuss what interests the students have
 - ii. Movement Assessment
- II. Tuesday
 - a. Warm-up
 - i. Vocal Warm-up
 - 1. BrainDance
 - 2. Down and Up
 - ii. Vocal Warm-up
 - 1. Bow and Arrow
 - 2. Flee Fly!
 - iii. Body and Voice Warm-up
 - 1. Ai O Dee Aye
 - b. Process
 - i. Creating a Soundscape
 - ii. Martha's Game
 - iii. Explore possible text for sharing
 - 1. Explore text from *Governing Alice*
 - 2. Explore text from *Wiley and the Hairy Man*
- III. Wednesday
 - a. Warm-up
 - i. Vocal Warm-up
 - 1. BrainDance

2. Down and Up
 - ii. Vocal Warm-up
 1. Bow and Arrow
 2. Flee Fly!
 - iii. Body and Voice Warm-up
 1. Ai O Dee Aye
 - b. Process
 - i. Select text to work with for sharing
 - ii. Work on developing context for selected piece
- IV. Thursday
 - a. Warm-up
 - i. Vocal Warm-up
 1. BrainDance
 2. Down and Up
 - ii. Vocal Warm-up
 1. Bow and Arrow
 2. Flee Fly!
 - iii. Body and Voice Warm-up
 1. Ai O Dee Aye
 - b. Process
 - i. Continue to develop piece for sharing
 - ii. Work in space
- V. Friday
 - a. Warm-up
 - i. Vocal Warm-up
 1. BrainDance
 2. Down and Up
 - ii. Vocal Warm-up
 1. Bow and Arrow
 2. Flee Fly!
 - iii. Body and Voice Warm-up
 1. Ai O Dee Aye
 - b. Process
 - i. Continue to develop piece for sharing

First State Children's Theatre Next Steps Program: Music and Movement Class 1

Designed by W. Riley Braem

27 August 2012

Length of Session: 60 minutes

Age Range: 12-14 & 14-18

Materials:

- Visual Schedule
- Clock
- Hoberman Sphere
- White Boards

- Play-Doh

Introductions:

The first thing that I will do is ask everyone to meet me circle center standing. Then I will introduce myself and introduce the management tool that I will use during our time together. I will use the tool, “Give me five”. I will explain that when I say, “Give me five” it means that everyone should hold one hand in the air, all talking should stop, and everyone should look at me for further directions. We will practice using the management tool.

After the management tool has been introduced we will begin the class by playing a name game. In this name game we will share our names and a gesture that represents our name to the class. After each person has shared their name and gesture the group will repeat their name and gesture. We will continue with the activity until all participants have shared their name and gesture. Note that some students might not know what gesture to do with their name. In this instance, ask the rest of the group if they have an idea or suggestion for the student who is having trouble. Once everyone has shared go around the circle once more this time say the names and do the gestures of without being prompted by the individual whose name and gesture you are doing.

After the name game, I will explain that in this class we will explore drama through music and movement and to prepare our bodies and voices we will need to warm-up.

Warm-up:

*The warm-up will be the same activities each day and they will occur in the same order each day.

1. Body Warm-up
 - a. BrainDance
 - b. Down and Up
2. Vocal Warm-up
 - a. Bow and Arrow
 - b. Flee Fly
3. Body and Voice
 - a. Ai O Dee Aye

Body Warm-up:

The **BrainDance** (Developed by Anne Green Gilbert with the Creative Dance Center in Seattle, Washington). I will ask the students to cover the space. If participants are not familiar with the term “Cover the space” I will explain that it means to walk around the room while attempting to use all of the available space for movement. I will also emphasize that we should not walk in any specific pattern.

1. **Breath:** Take 4 deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth.
2. **Tactile:** With your hands strongly:
 - a. Squeeze each arm and leg, your torso, our back, face, neck, and head

- b. Tap your arms, legs, torso, back, face, neck, and head (Tap Lightly)
 - c. Pat your arms, legs, torso, back, face, neck, and head (Pat Lightly)
 - d. Rub your arms, legs, torso, back, face, neck, and head
3. **Core-Distal:** Start by making yourself as small as you can (into a little ball) and slowly rolling away from your center until you are fully extended stretching through your toes and fingers as much as you can.
 4. **Head-Tail:** Curl your center in and out. Think about moving everything between your shoulders and your pelvis.
 5. **Upper-Lower:** Plant your feet in the floor and keep your knees slightly bent and articulate your upper body. Move your torso, arms, and head any way you can without moving your lower body.
 6. **Body-Side:** Make an X with your body (like a jumping jack) and slightly bend your arms at the elbow. Move in a way that the right side of your body is moving while the left side of your body remains still. Do this for both sides of your body.
 7. **Cross-Lateral:** Again, make an X with your body. This time find ways to move your body so that the right side of your body is reaching for the left side of your body. Example is your right elbow reaching towards your left knee. The idea is to move across the median of your body.
 8. **Vestibular:** Swing upper body forward and backward and side-to-side. Make sure that at some point the head is upside down. Tip, sway, roll, and rock in different directions and on different level. The idea is to be off balance. Finally spin in a circle for 15 seconds in one direction, breathe, and rest 15 seconds, and then spin in a circle for 15 seconds going in the opposite direction as you were before.

Down and Up (taught to me by Pamela Sterling via Clayton Corzatte and based on Feldenkreis Movement Techniques).

1. Ask participants to join you Circle Center Standing making sure that there is about an arm's length between each individual.
2. Next have each student stand at a parallel second position (plant their feet shoulder's length apart with soft knees). They will then place their arms in Fifth position en haut (arms are rounded and in a high position above the head think of making a U with your arms and your head being at the bottom center of the U). This is the beginning position for this exercise.
3. From the beginning position, in a swinging motion, have the students swing their arms down leading with the elbows letting their momentum take them down into a deep pli  (bending of the knees) continuing through until their legs are once again straight, backs are flat, and arms are in an en bas parallel to the floor and perpendicular to the legs (thinking once again of having the arms

in a U shape this time the arms are around the torso of the body). Then swing the arms back up once again going through a deep plié following through until you are once again at the starting position. This sequence from start to finish is one complete Down and Up.

4. Next complete 3 Down and Up cycles and on the final one when the arms swing to the en haut (starting position) let them continue around making a circle around until the arms are in first position (first position arms are rounded like en bas and en haut but they are to the front of the body. Imagine a line shooting out from your navel, when the middle finger of the curved extended arm meets this line that is first position arms.) Then swinging the arms backwards until they are once again at the starting position. This sequence is once complete set of Down and Up.
5. On the third set of Down and Ups we will add a sauté (jump). The jump will be inserted after the body and arms have gone down and before they begin to go up. So if we were to recite the following it would go with the motions of our bodies:

Down and Up
Down and Up
Down and Up and Around and Around

Down and Up
Down and Up
Down and Up and Around and Around

Down, Jump, and Up
Down, Jump, and Up
Down, Jump, and Up and Around and Around
*Remove Body Warm-up from Visual Schedule

Vocal Warm-up:

Bow and Arrow (Learned from Dr. William Leonard).

1. I will ask the students to cover the space keeping soft focus and being careful not to run into anyone or anything in the room.
2. Next, I will tell the students that I will slowly count back from five and when I get to one I want them to stop. I will then count, 5-4-3-2-1.
3. Next, I will instruct the participants to look around the room and find a spot on the wall or ceiling, above everyone's head, and to focus on that point. In the event that it does not seem that some have a point to focus on I will ask them to point where they are focusing.
4. Then I will ask them to raise their hand if they have ever shot a bow and arrow. After the response is received I will explain that we are going to use our voices and send them like an arrow to the spot that we have selected.

5. I will then instruct students to pantomime (explanation of pantomime will be provided if needed) taking out their bow and drawing their arrow and taking aim at their point of focus.
6. Next I will tell them that when I say GO I want them to count to five in a variety of voices exercising their vocal range. (For example, count to five in a voice as low as you can comfortably go, as high as you can comfortably go, in a made-up language, or as if it is the funniest or saddest thing you have ever said.)
7. I will tell them to count to five in the highest voice that they can comfortably speak in and to send their arrows off with a Zing! An example in a high pitched voice would be: 1-2-3-4-5 Zing!
8. I will then ask the students to cover the space and I will repeat the above steps until 3-5 times.

Flee Fly! (Learned from Kathleen Arcovio Pennyway). Flee Fly! is a call and response vocal warm up. In this exercise the facilitator leads the call and response and the group keeps time by slapping their thighs and then clapping their hands. The goal is to increase the tempo and explore different vocal ranges.

1. I will begin by explaining that we will now learn a call and response vocal warm-up called Flee Fly!. I will instruct the participants to repeat after me so we can learn the words.

Flee! (Flee!)

Flee Fly! (Flee Fly!)

Flee Fly Flo! (Flee Fly Flo!)

La Vista! (La Vista!)

La Vista! (La Vista!)

Come-a-la, come-a-la, come-a-la vista! (Come-a-la, come-a-la, come-a-la vista!)

Oh no no no no la vista! (Oh no no no no la vista!)

Eenie-meenie-eskimeenie-shoo-bop-shoo-wan-a-meenie! (Eenie-meenie-eskimeenie-shoo-bop-shoo-wan-a-meenie!)

Zep dip doo bop doo bop day!

2. After the words have been taught I will establish a tempo by slapping my thighs and then clapping my hands. I will instruct the class to help me keep the tempo and then we will begin the call and response activity.
3. We will continue working with this activity by increasing or decreasing the tempo and adjusting the pitch that we sing it in.

*Remove Vocal Warm-up from Visual Schedule

Body and Voice Warm-up:

Ai O Dee Aye (learned from B. Chris Hardin). Ai O Dee Aye is a vocal and movement warm-up that allows us to explore tones and sounds that we typically do not get to explore in the English language.

1. I will ask the students to once again join me circle center standing (if we are not already there). I will then introduce the last of our daily warm-up activities another call and response song called Ai

O Dee Aye. Once again, I will instruct the participants to repeat after me.

Oh Yay Na Rimbo (Oh Yay Na Rimbo)

Oh Yay Na Rimbo (Oh Yay Na Rimbo)

Ba Bum Kila Ba Bum Kila (Ba Bum Kila Ba Bum Kila)

Ba Bum Kila Ba Bum Kila (Ba Bum Kila Ba Bum Kila)

Ai O Dee Aye (Ai O Dee Aye)

Ai O Dee Aye Gamata (Ai O Dee Aye Gamata)

Ai O Dee Aye (Ai O Dee Aye)

Ai O Dee Aye Gamata (Ai O Dee Aye Gamata)

2. Once we have learned the words we will sing though the song once.
3. We will then begin to explore improvised movement with this call and response activity. I will ask students, what kind of activities might people singing this song be doing? Possible answers are: playing, working, celebrating something.
4. Next I will explain that we will sing this song as if we are celebrating. I will instruct that one by one we will each hold the Hoberman Sphere, and while we possess the sphere we are free to move our bodies in any way that we want. Once we have explored movement we will pass the sphere to the next person in the circle. The group will continue singing the call and response song until all participants have explored movement.

*Remove Body and Voice Warm-up from Visual Schedule

Process:

Interest Inventory

I will then ask the students to join me circle center seated. I will ask everyone to share the things that they enjoy. Some prompting questions might be:

- What do you do for fun?
- What is your favorite book?
- What is your favorite movie?
- What is your favorite television show?
- If you could have any superpower what would it be?
- If you could go anywhere in the world where would you go?

These questions are meant to promote discussion among the participants while informing me what the group enjoys.

Movement Assessment

1. I will instruct the students to join me circle center standing while I give the next set of instructions. I will explain that we will now be moving our bodies so I can see how everyone moves through space. I will split the class into three groups by counting them off (1-2-3, 1-2-3, etc.). I will then have them form three single file lines with their backs against one of the walls of the classroom.

2. Next, I will tell them that we will be moving from one side of the room to the other in groups of three explaining that one person from each single file line will go at a time.

Illustration of Activity

Beginning of Activity:

X X X X
 X X X X
 X X X X

During Activity:

X X -----X----- X
 X X -----X----- X
 X X -----X----- X

End of Activity:

X X X X
 X X X X
 X X X X

3. We will explore moving across the floor in the following ways:
 - a. Leading with different parts of our body (knees, head, chest, etc)
 - b. At different levels (high, medium, and low)
 - c. Moving forwards and backwards
 - d. Tilting, falling, and exploring other means of movement though space
 - e. Using a combination of the above

*Remove Process from Visual Schedule

Closing:

Once the movement assessment is complete I will ask the students to once again join me circle center standing. I will congratulate them on a job well done and thank them for the work that they did in class today. Next I will inform them whether there will be a class the next day and if so, what that day's schedule will be. Finally, I will ask them to line up at the door and send them to their next class.

As you can see, the fully written session design looks like any other session design you would see for a drama class. Keep in mind that this session design is lengthy because I list the step-by-step instructions for warm-up activities as not all teaching artist facilitate activities the same way. I also provide the detailed instructions because too often we play a game or facilitate an activity that

is known by several other names and may be facilitated with different instructions.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT & TEACHING ARTIST SELECTION

Participant Selection

There are many things to consider when working with individuals with complex disabilities. Some have little to no verbal communication skills, others might have hearing and/or vision impairments, some might have physical conditions prohibiting “on our feet” work, others may have a seizure disorder as part of their diagnosis, while others may not be toilet trained and/or still experience bathroom accidents. The list goes on and on. What you need to ask yourself is: what can our program handle?

Know that it is acceptable for you to develop a set of standards for participants. This may seem contradictory to the idea of offering programming for these individuals but you need to understand your limits as a program. When I was 13, I began volunteering at a camp. This camp serves adults who are mentally and physically disabled. As a volunteer, we are responsible for 10-14 campers whose diagnoses range from mild intellectual disabilities to severe complex disabilities. One of the scariest moments at camp was my first seizure.

The camp has a wonderful orientation to help prepare volunteers for the work that you will do with campers and this includes what to do in case of a seizure¹⁵. There are different categories of seizures but the scariest are the “grand mal” or tonic-clonic seizures. An individual experiencing this class of seizure may experience unconsciousness, convulsions, and muscle rigidity (this is not a

¹⁵ For more information about seizures please refer to sites like the Mayo Clinic (<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/grand-mal-seizure/DS00222> <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/epilepsy/DS00342>), the CDC, or other local medical organizations/facilities.

complete list of what might be experienced by a person having a seizure). Luckily I knew what to do and so did my fellow counselors. The moral is to be prepared to handle the conditions of the individuals who you admit to your program. While they are in your care you are responsible for them, so be realistic about your program and what your program personnel can handle. I suggest setting up an application process for potential participants. This would include a paper application and an in person interview with the parent(s)/guardian of the prospective participant.

Paper Application. In addition to acquiring basic application information (name, age, emergency contact information, etc), a paper application allows you to ask questions that may or may not be embarrassing to ask during a face-to-face interview (for example, is your child toilet trained?). You want to ask questions that will help you assess how the child interacts in social settings. Some questions may include:

- How does your child communicate? (spoken language, sign language, etc.)
- Does your child have any sensory needs we need to be aware of? (auditory, visual, smells, touch, taste)
- Does your child display any behaviors associated with his/her diagnosis that we should be aware of? (seizers, tantrums, yelling, self abuse, etc.)
- Are there triggers for these behaviors?
- What helps calm your child down?
- Is your child toilet trained?

- Is there anything else you think we should know about your child?

These are just a few of the questions that might be part of a paper application.

Again, you are asking parents to divulge personal information, so inform them that this information will only be shared with you and your staff and all information will be kept confidential¹⁶.

Face-to-Face Interview. Let's face it, sometimes people stretch the truth because they want their children to take part in an activity. It happens. In my 18 years of working with individuals with complex disabilities I have seen it all. I have seen parents and guardians write one thing on an application and then during camp or class the exact opposite happens. An in-person interview allows you to assess how the child interacts, but also how the parent interacts. I feel one of the first questions to ask the potential participant should have something to do with how he/she feels about taking this class/attending this camp.

This may seem silly but there are times when individuals with complex disabilities are signed up and sent to camps and classes in which they have no interest. A few years back I had a camper (we will call him J) who had been coming to camp for many years. Over time he became increasingly difficult to work with for the staff. He made it clear that he did not want to come to camp not only in his lack of interest in activities, but also by simply saying, "I don't want to come to camp anymore." We brought this to the attention to his family who, time and time again, told us that he loved coming to camp and that all he did for the next several months was talk about how much fun he had.

¹⁶ Confidentiality requirements are dictated by federal and state laws. I recommend researching privacy laws for individuals with disabilities in your state.

One day he was at my activity and he was being very stubborn. Two of his cabin's counselors were over with him trying every trick and strategy they knew to try and get him to participate. Keep in mind that each cabin has between 10-14 campers and 4-5 counselors. J's unwillingness to participate was taking resources away from other campers. Each time he refused to participate, one or two counselors had to work with him to get him to reengage in the activity. The time spent dealing with J left two counselors to assist the rest of the campers in his cabin. I went up to him and had a little chat with him about why he didn't want to participate, and again he told me that he didn't want to come to camp.

I asked why he came back if he didn't want to come and he told me that his parents made him come. So I asked, why would your parents make you come if you aren't happy here? And he replied, because this is when they go on vacation. My heart broke. Unfortunately I would learn that in fact his parents took this time to go on vacation with the rest of J's siblings and dropped him off at camp.

This sort of thing happens more than I care to think. The sad fact is that raising a child with any kind of disability is hard work that never ends. Many parents/guardians use camps and classes as respite care¹⁷. While I understand the demands of caring for individuals with complex disabilities, I do not agree with placing individuals in a situation not mutually beneficial to all parties. In the end, a face-to-face interview allows you to talk to the child and parent and discover the motivations behind the desire to participate in your program.

¹⁷ Respite Care is short term or temporary relief of those who are caring for family members who would require constant care and supervision.

Face-to-face interviews are also important because they allow you to have a conversation with the child and find out his/her likes and dislikes. I suggest spending time talking with both the parent and child together as well as spending time with both separately. I also think the teaching artist(s) that will be teaching the child's class should be present during the interview. Understandably this may not be possible but I feel it is beneficial for the teaching artist.

When talking to both the parent and the child, cover the overview of the class. Talking about the daily schedule, class sizes, expectations for class behavior, and goals are good topics to discuss. Next, I suggest that the teaching artist give a tour of the facility with the potential participant while the program coordinator (director of education, other teaching artist, etc.) stays and discusses administrative matters with the parent/guardian. I feel that it is important to separate the two because children act differently when their parents are not around, and parents tend to be more candid when their children cannot hear what they are saying. Additionally, this is the time to talk to the parents and see what their goals are for the program. Some might be interested in having their child participate as part of a therapy program. Letting parents know up front that you ARE NOT a therapist is of the utmost importance. While I understand there is therapeutic value in the work done in the drama studio as teaching artists, the goals we set for our classes and students must have art at the forefront.

With the child, I would discuss his or her likes and dislikes, what they do for fun, what their dreams are, and what excites them about taking part in this drama class. This is your chance to learn as much about the child as possible. This

information can be useful in the classroom. When I was with First Stage's Next Steps program, Jennifer Adams, Academy Director and driving force behind the development of the Next Steps Program, compiled information sheets from the parent/child interview with their name, age, picture, goals, triggers, and coping strategies for each participant. This was a priceless asset for me as a teaching artist. It allowed me to enter the class with knowledge of each of my students.

Things to remember when selecting participants:

- Make sure that your program can handle the issues and concerns associated with the participants you select.
- Learn as much about your participants as possible in the application and interview process.
- Make sure that participation is driven by the child's desire to be there and not the parent's.
- Don't be afraid to tell parents that your program is not able to provide the care and attention that their child requires. Trust me; parents will be much happier if you are upfront and honest with them.

If you keep these things in mind when you are selecting participants it can greatly improve the outcome of your program.

Teaching Artist Selection

Just as you want to make sure that the youth participating in your program want to be there, you want to make sure that the teaching artists you hire want to be there too. They need to be individuals who have a great deal of patience and the ability to think on their feet. Holding a Teaching Artist "audition" where they teach a short session would be beneficial and aid in the selection process. This

probably sounds like every teaching artist you know, but unless you have worked with special needs communities, I do not think you can really understand the responsibility that teaching a class with this community entails.

When selecting these individuals you want to let them know what they are getting into. Give them as much information about the individuals with whom they will be working. Training your teaching artists about the behaviors that they may encounter and giving them strategies to handle them are the keys to success.

Building Partnerships. In addition to selecting quality teaching artists and preparing them for the challenges they face when working with this community, building partnerships with specialists and educators who deal with this community on a day-to-day basis is another key to success. Reaching out to university special education programs, research and resource organizations such as the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center TRIAD (Treatment & Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders), the National Association of Down Syndrome, and The Kennedy Center LEAD (Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability), and other local organizations in your area is a wonderful step in the right direction. Having partnerships with special education professionals would allow you to learn strategies and tools for the classroom.

These individuals might also be able to serve you in the classroom too. In a perfect world we would have teaching artists who are also special education professionals but the chances you will find the perfect person are slim. Just as you would not want a teaching artist walking into a special education classroom to take on the role as classroom teacher, you would not want a special education

teacher with little to no drama experience walking into your drama class to take a lead teaching role. These individuals can serve as trainers to your teaching artists and teaching assistant in the classroom instead. Find the balance that works for you and your program. Being able to assure parents that you have collaborated and received training from special education professionals will speak volumes for your program.

When selecting teaching artists and teaching assistants for classes that serve the complex disability community, keep the following things in mind:

- Hire Teaching Artists who want to be there and understand the challenges associated with working with this community.
- Build partnerships with organizations in your area
- Incorporate special education professionals into your program via training and teaching assistants.

CHAPTER 5: RESOURCES FOR PARTICIPANTS AND TEACHING ARTISTS

After you have selected your teaching artists, teaching assistants and participants, you want to make sure that you provide resources that will help promote success. There are resources you can provide that will help prepare teaching artists and facilitate a positive classroom environment. Likewise, there are resources you can provide to the participants that will help them be successful.

Participant Resources

Most of the resources that you have for your program will be of benefit to your participants. The resources I discuss below are:

- Sensory Rooms
- Social Stories
- Visual Schedules

While not all of these resources may be readily available, modified versions can be made at little to no expense (with the exception of the sensory room).

Sensory Rooms. Sensory rooms are a wonderful resource to have for individuals with complex disabilities. A sensory room is a room where participants can use multi-sensory experiences to explore, calm themselves, and practice skills. For the purposes of creating a sensory room for a recreational drama program you will want to create a space for participants to go when they need to calm down¹⁸. There are many different ways to create a sensory room. They can be elaborate or they can be simple. Materials that you can include in your sensory room are:

¹⁸ To see examples of Sensory Rooms please see Appendix B.

- Mirrors
- Music (cheap CD player or mp3 player)
- Alternative lighting (non florescent or overhead lighting)
- Sensory items (Play-Doh, squishy balls, etc.)
- Fragrance Sprays¹⁹
- Various seating options (exercise balls, bean bag furniture, mats, rocking chairs, etc.)

The below illustration is an example of a simple sensory room. For additional sensory room examples please refer to Appendix C.



Figure 1: Meena, Kathy. *Sensory Room-Meena-after-pic 10*. 2011. My Special Needs NetworkWeb. 8 Feb 2013.

<<http://www.myspecialneedsnetwork.com/photo/sensory-room-meena-after-pic-9/prev?context=latest>>.

¹⁹ Be cautious of fragrance sprays as a little can go a long way. It is best to keep these out of the hands of participants and in the hands of teaching artists/assistance.

I believe that having a sensory room is an important part of any special needs focused program. If a child does need time to calm down you want him or her to have a place to do so that is safe, productive, and has the child's needs in mind.

Social Stories. By definition, social stories are an individualized or student specific tool for teaching relevant social information and appropriate responses (Aspy & Grossman 216). In other words, a Social Story is a narrative that describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses. For example, a short social story might be:



This wonderful tool was developed by Carol Gray²⁰ in the early 1990s.

The basic idea of a social story is that it can be used to help participants modify unacceptable behavior or aide them in adjusting to new situations.

Aspy and Grossman tell us that “Creation of quality Social Stories™ requires thorough observation of the student in the environment with careful

²⁰ Gray is the Director of The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding in Grandville, Michigan.

attention to the language used, details of the learner’s behavior, and specifics of the situation to be addressed” (217). Social Stories™ are comprised of the following types of sentences:

Table 2:

Types of Sentences Found in Social Stories

Type	Description
Descriptive	Provide factual information--what, why, when, where, who.
Directive	Describe desired behaviors or goals for a situation
Perspective	Describe the feelings, thoughts, and reactions of characters in the story.
Affirmative	Provide reassurance or state a rule or law.
Control	State an analogy identified by the student/learner to help in remembering the story.
Cooperative	Identify those who will provide support in following through with a story

Source: The Ziggurat Model: A Framework for Designing Comprehensive Interventions for High-Functioning Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Aspy & Grossman 217).

Because these stories can be used and adapted for all kinds of purposes they are a wonderful resource for drama programs. You can have social stories that:

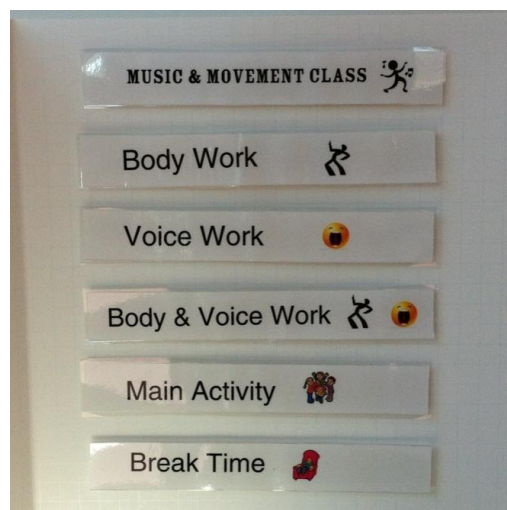
- Introduce participants to the environment where they will take class
- Introduce participants to the teachers with whom they will be working

- Describe the daily schedule that they will follow
- Inform participants of future events
- Adjust unacceptable behavior in the drama classroom

These are just a few ways that social stories can be utilized. I enjoy the different way that you can create a social story. For example, you can create a video social story, a comic book social story, or even an article social story for young adult or adult participants.

Visual Schedules. A visual schedule is one of the easiest resources to make when working with special needs communities. Nothing more than a visual representation of the daily schedule, I think the combination of pictures and words are what make visual schedules work. Visual schedules can be as elaborate as you want or as simple as taking a piece of foam core board, labels with tasks that include text and a picture, and attaching them to the board with Velcro.

Here is the visual schedule that I used for my class at First Stage.



While these resources do not guarantee success, they do give you an advantage. Many individuals with complex disabilities use these resources in their

day-to-day lives. Not having them available for your participants would be equivalent to leaving your planner or mobile device at home. Providing these will aid your participants in being successful.

Teaching Artist Resources

The biggest resource for teaching artists is training. It is important to remember that you want to provide just enough of an overview and background of complex disabilities. It would be easy to spend lots of time talking about all of the details and the science behind each disability, but probably that would not be helpful to your teaching artists. Think about what your teaching artists and teaching assistants need to know. They need to know about the social deficiencies that individuals with complex disabilities have, how they communicate with others, what behaviors (both good and bad) can be expected, and strategies to deal with behavior.

Next is teaching assistance. This might be a person who serves in a role of teaching assistant or an intern. As I stated earlier, the lead teacher must be able to continue with the lesson that he or she is teaching if an issue arises. Having other individuals who can back you up in the classroom and help with situations as they arise ensures that your participants' time is well spent. The ratio in which your program operates can be anywhere from one-on-one to one-to-three depending on the needs of your participants.

Information sheets²¹ are another resource of great value to the teaching team. These information sheets should provided participant's name, age, picture, goals, triggers, and coping strategies. This information will allow your teaching

²¹ Sample information sheet can be seen in the appendix.

artists to be prepared before they step into the classroom. When possible, teaching artists should help create these sheets based on information obtained from the face-to-face interview with participants. These sheets should be seen only by the teaching team as they will contain private information. Confidentiality is a necessity when working with special needs populations.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Creating a recreational drama program for individuals with complex disabilities is a possibility for any TYA company. While undertaking this task is a challenge, the benefits to individuals in the special needs communities can far outweigh the logistical problems. I have provided an abbreviated overview of what complex disabilities are, characteristics that may present in individuals with complex disabilities, and prevalence rates of individuals with various complex disabilities. Statistically, TYA companies already serve individuals with complex disabilities. Whether the individuals you serve are not diagnosed or the diagnosis does not affect them in a way that would prohibit them from participating in recreational drama activities, the probability that you serve members of this population are great. The task that remains is opening up your programming to all members of special needs communities.

I have talked about program development, looked at the role that typically developing youth can play, provided two possible models, discussed adaptability, and provided an example of curriculum I have found to be successful. While the idea of inclusion is ideal, remember to know the limits of your program. Starting your program with a non-inclusive model and allowing it to grow naturally is better than beginning with an inclusive model that ends in disaster. No matter the path your company takes in developing programming, remember that the key to success is adaptability.

As I mentioned before, selecting teaching artists who want to be part of a program serving individuals with complex disabilities is key. Finding individuals

who have a background in improvisational skills (being able to be in the moment and adapt), a strong foundation in the art of theatre and drama, and the ability to maintain an environment that may be much more structured than they are accustomed. These basic characteristics, in addition to enjoying being a teaching artist, are characteristics that your teaching artists must have. Just as the selection of your teaching staff is important, the selection of your participants is important as well. Remember: know the limits of your program. It would be better to tell parents that your program is not able to provide for their needs rather than accepting them and failing miserably.

I have also discussed the resources that can help make your program a success. Providing training, teaching assistance, and support to your teaching artists sets them up for success. Similarly, providing your participants with the resources that can help them be successful will be what sets your program apart. Providing Social Stories, visual schedules and, if budget allows it, a sensory room will give participants the support they need. Not only will these resources benefit your teaching artists and participants, they will also show parents that you have done your homework and have the ability to care for their child while they are with you.

Final Thoughts

Working with individuals with complex disabilities can be scary. When I first started working with special needs communities I was petrified, but the fear soon went away and now I cannot imagine a future where individuals with special needs are not part of my life. The task of creating recreational drama programs for

youth with complex disabilities is difficult. Developing a quality program is not something that occurs overnight. It takes time, dedication, and resources.

I believe that the creative arts are part of each of us and they, like so many things, are part of our cultural history and the right of every person. I believe that every child, adolescent, and adult, regardless of (dis)ability, should have access to our cultural treasures. I believe it is our obligation as artists to provide opportunities for all those who wish to participate in the arts of theatre and drama.

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APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): The science in which tactics derived from the principles of behavior are applied to improve socially significant behavior and experimentation is used to identify the variables responsible for the improvement in behavior.

Asperger Syndrome (AS) (sometimes referred to as High Functioning Autism [HFA]): People with AS usually have some milder symptoms of autistic disorder. Challenges in social skills and unusual behavior or interests might be present but problems with language or intellectual disabilities are typically not present.

Autism Spectrum Disorder: (ASD) is a group of neurological (developmental) disabilities that can cause social, communication, and behavioral challenges.

Autistic Disorder (commonly called “classic” autism): People with autistic disorder usually have significant language delays, social and communication challenges, and unusual behaviors and interests.

Complex Disability: Individuals who have conditions that co-exist. These conditions overlap and interlock creating a complex profile. Individuals with complex disabilities present with a range of issues and combination of layered needs—e.g. mental health, relationships, behavioral, physical, medical, sensory, communication, and cognitive. (Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Research Project).

Developmental Disabilities: Are a diverse group of severe chronic conditions that are due to mental and/or physical impairments. People with developmental

disabilities have problems with major life activities such as language, mobility, learning, self-help, and independent living.

Mental Retardation: Is significantly subaverage [sic] general intellectual functioning that is accompanied by significant limitations in adaptive functioning in at least two of the following skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, health, and safety.

Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS also called “atypical autism”): People with PDD-NOS may meet some of the criteria for autistic disorder or Asperger Syndrome but not all. These individuals usually have fewer and milder symptoms than those with autistic disorder.

Profound Disabilities: Individuals exhibit profound developmental discrepancies in cognition, communication, social skills development, mobility, and self help skills; includes people with profound mental retardation. (Sternberg).

APPENDIX B

TEACHING ARTIST RESOURCES

Source: Nashville Children's Theatre

SOCIAL SKILLS SURVEY - TEACHER

Student's Name: _____ Age: _____

Teacher completing form: _____ Date: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

How long teacher has known student: _____

Your student has applied to attend the TRIAD Social Skills camp for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Including typically developing peers is a vital aspect of our camp. These children model appropriate behaviors for our campers, serve as helpers to our counselors, and they provide the opportunity for our campers to learn and practice appropriate social interaction skills, and ideally, establish friendships with them. We would like your input regarding this student and his/her ability to fulfill this important role at camp. We appreciate your taking the time to complete this survey.

1) How much interest in interacting with classmates does this student show?

1 2 3 4 5
Very little Very much
interest interest

2) How much interest in helping others does this student show?

1 2 3 4 5
As little As much
as possible as possible

3) How well does this student interact with classmates?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Very
Very well well

4) How many friends in the classroom does this student have? _____

5) Does this student ever have the opportunity to interact with any students with special needs? If so, are these interactions appropriate?

6) Is this student responsive to adult instruction and show appropriate classroom behavior? _____

7) Please list any special interests, skills, talents, or areas of expertise that this student has demonstrated:

8) Would you recommend this student to be a peer at our camp? Why or why not?

THANK YOU!!

Parent questionnaire for "student's name"

1. What are your child's areas of strength?
 - Very good at mimicking, great ability to display emotion,, great at memorizing dialogue from movies, musically inclined, likes being up on stage!
2. Some things that help your child do his/her best are...
 - Verbal praise=great motivator (i.e "Good Job" Nice going" "I like how you..."
3. How does your child best communicate with others?
 - Spoken Language, Written language; is very verbal and a very visual learner (show him how to do things)
4. Does your child have any sensory needs of which we need to be aware?
 - Yes/No
 - Auditory and some smells; sudden and loud noises (i.e motorcycles, trucks, sirens, buzzers) Also does not like clapping, however if people clap for him he seems to tolerate it.
5. What kind of adaptations have helped with these sensitivities in the past?
 - Covers his ears with hands. also has noise cancelling headphones he uses at school assemblies
6. What behaviors related to autism spectrum disorder are we most likely to see at First Stage?
 - He repeatedly talks to himself, reciting favorite commercials and dialogues from movies
7. Triggers for behaviors
 - Sensory sensitivity, maybe to escape a boring or difficult task
8. In your experience, what are the best ways to cope with these challenges and get your child back on task?
 - Verbal reminders to stay on task, easily redirected
9. When your child is starting to get agitated, what will your child do? What helps calm him/her down?
 - Ask him, "....., do you need a break right now or can you wait 5 minutes until we finish this task?" Water/walking break is fine
10. Is there anything else you think we should know about your child?
 - has participated in two school plays, Aladdin and Beauty and the Beast. In B&B he was a merchant with one line where he pops up and yells "Bonjour!" he is a wonderful, helpful and polite boy.
11. Medical info
 - ???

*This students name has been removed and replaced with "...."

Sample Training PowerPoint Presentations provided by Mary Stone with the Next Steps Program at First Stage.

Slide 1



Slide 2



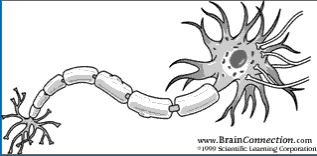
Slide 3

Carly's Story

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNZVV4Ciccq&feature=related>

Slide 4

Axons



www.BrainConnection.com
© 1999 Scientific Learning Corporation

- Brain cells are linked by axons – long cables insulated with myelin – that form the white matter.
- In autistic people, there are too many cables within local areas, but not enough links from one region to another.
- Too many local connections, not enough long distance.

Slide 5

- Autism is a life-long developmental disorder that seriously affects the way individuals communicate and interact with those around them.
- It usually manifests itself during the first three years of life.
- Autism is a “spectrum disorder,” meaning that its symptoms and characteristics can present themselves in a variety of combinations, ranging from mild to quite severe.

Slide 6

- Currently 1 in every 88 children are diagnosed with autism.
- Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability. In the US, autism increased by 172% during the 1990's. **The latest analysis, from a 2008 survey, shows autism is up 23% since 2006 and 78% since 2002.**
- Autism spectrum disorders are now more common than Down Syndrome, childhood cancer, cystic fibrosis, multiple sclerosis, blindness and deafness.

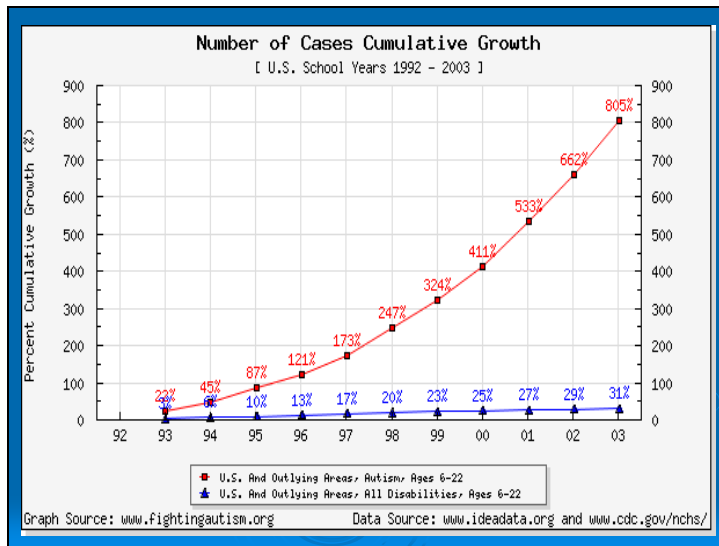
Slide 7

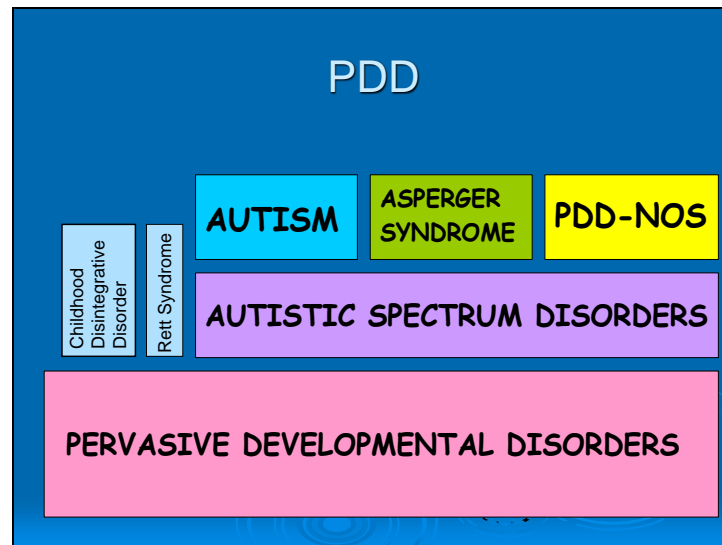
Why the increase in Autism?

- The increase in prevalence is only partly explained by the broadening of the diagnosis, improved detection and more awareness," he said. "A large proportion of autism, some 50%, remains unexplained."

CDC 2012

Slide 8





Basic description:

Autism is characterized by:

- Impairment in social interaction
- Impairment in communication
- Restricted, repetitive, stereotyped patterns of behavior (e.g., spinning, flapping)
- Onset prior to three years

Asperger's Syndrome:

- Qualitative impairment in social interaction
- Restricted, repetitive, stereotyped patterns of behavior, activity or interest
- No significant delays in language, cognitive development, self-help or adaptive behavior

Lorna Wing (1983) identified the following main features:

- Lack of empathy
- Naïve, inappropriate, one-sided interaction
- Little or no ability to form friendships
- Pedantic, repetitive speech
- Poor nonverbal communication
- Intense absorption in certain subjects
- Clumsy, ill-coordinated movements and odd postures

PDD-NOS

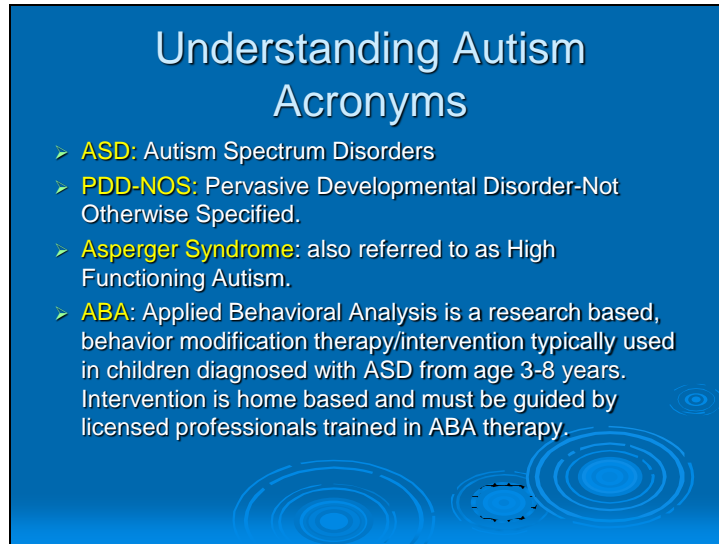
- Children with PDDNOS either (a) do not fully meet the criteria of symptoms clinicians use to diagnose any of the four specific types of PDD

above, and/or (b) do not have the *degree* of impairment described in any of the above four PDD specific types.

Slide 10

Understanding Autism Acronyms

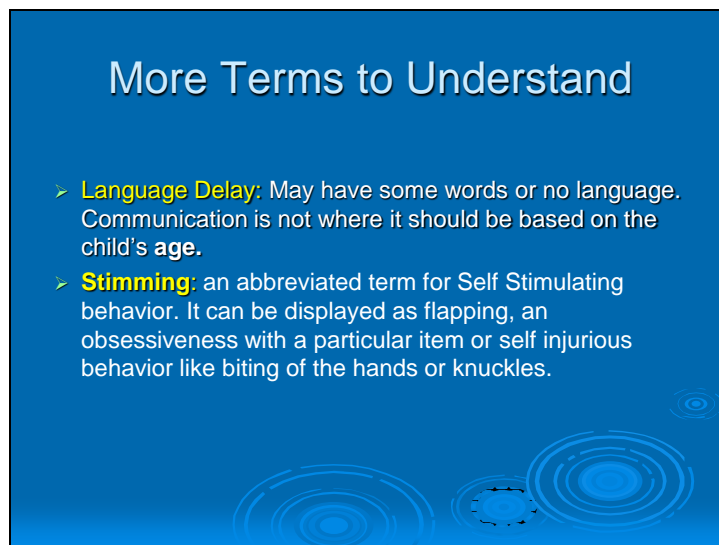
- **ASD:** Autism Spectrum Disorders
- **PDD-NOS:** Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified.
- **Asperger Syndrome:** also referred to as High Functioning Autism.
- **ABA:** Applied Behavioral Analysis is a research based, behavior modification therapy/intervention typically used in children diagnosed with ASD from age 3-8 years. Intervention is home based and must be guided by licensed professionals trained in ABA therapy.



Slide 11

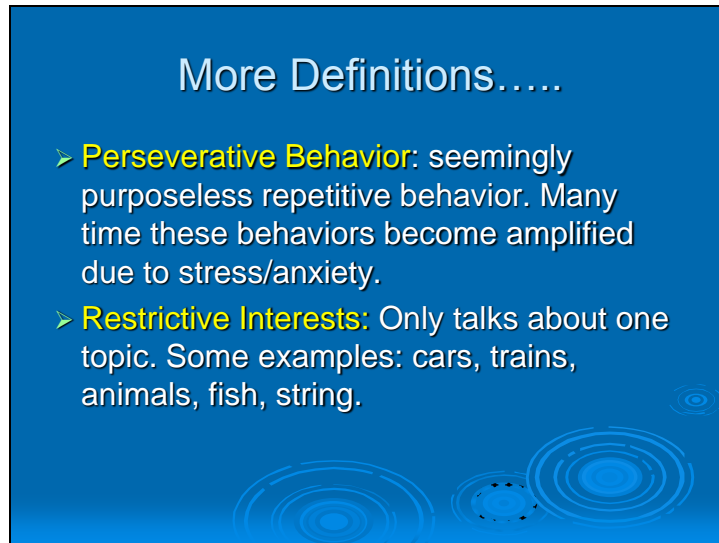
More Terms to Understand

- **Language Delay:** May have some words or no language. Communication is not where it should be based on the child's **age**.
- **Stimming:** an abbreviated term for Self Stimulating behavior. It can be displayed as flapping, an obsessiveness with a particular item or self injurious behavior like biting of the hands or knuckles.



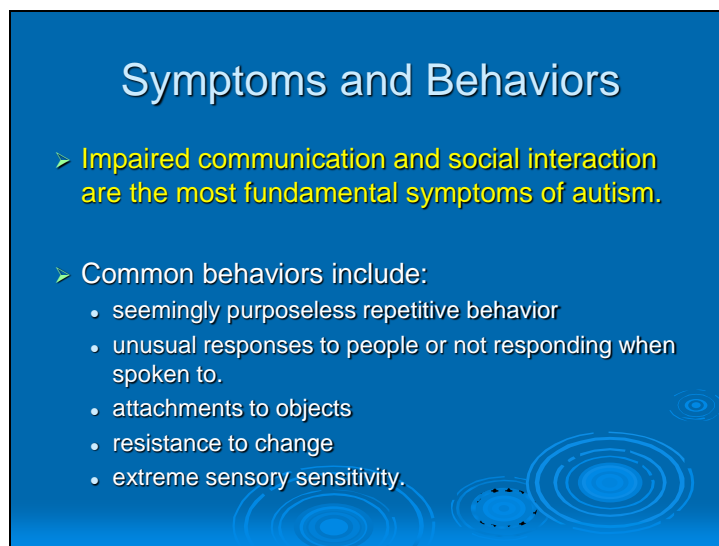
More Definitions.....

- **Perseverative Behavior:** seemingly purposeless repetitive behavior. Many time these behaviors become amplified due to stress/anxiety.
- **Restrictive Interests:** Only talks about one topic. Some examples: cars, trains, animals, fish, string.



Symptoms and Behaviors

- **Impaired communication and social interaction are the most fundamental symptoms of autism.**
- **Common behaviors include:**
 - seemingly purposeless repetitive behavior
 - unusual responses to people or not responding when spoken to.
 - attachments to objects
 - resistance to change
 - extreme sensory sensitivity.



Defining Developmental Delay

- **Developmental Delay:** As a child grows and develops, he learns different skills, such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, or waving goodbye. These skills are known as developmental milestones. A child with a developmental delay (a milestone delay of more than 2 standard deviations below the norm) does not reach these milestones at the same time as other children the same age. There are five main groups of skills that make up the developmental milestones. A child may have a developmental delay in one or more of these areas: Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Language, Cognitive, and Social.

Defining Sensory Processing Issues

- **Sensory Issues:** We all learn through our senses. Sensory processing is how we transform sensory information from within our own bodies and the external environment into messages we can act on. It's tempting to think of senses (touch, sight, sound, movement, body awareness, taste, and smell) as separate channels of information, but they work *together* to give us a reliable picture of the world and our place in it.

Slide 16

What Sensory Disorders look like:

- Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders may have: Out-of-proportion **reactions to touch, sounds, sights, movement, tastes, or smells, including:**
- Bothered by clothing fabrics, labels, tags, etc.
- Distressed by light touch or unexpected touch
- Dislikes getting messy
- Resists grooming activities
- Very sensitive to sounds (volume or frequency)
- Squints, blinks, or rubs eyes frequently
- Bothered by lights or patterns
- High activity level or very sedentary
- Unusually high or low pain threshold

Slide 17

Defining Social Stories

- **A Social Story™** describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format. The goal of a Social Story™ is to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by its audience. Half of all Social Stories™ developed should affirm something that an individual does well. Although the goal of a Story™ should never be to change the individual's behavior, that individual's improved understanding of events and expectations may lead to more effective responses.

Defining Modifications

- **Modifications** refer to changes made to curriculum expectations in order to meet the needs of the student. Modifications are made when the expectations are beyond the students level of ability. Modifications may be minimal or very complex depending on the student performance.

Example of Modifications

- include student in same activity but individualize the expectations and materials student is involved in.
- same theme/unit but provide different task and expectations.

Defining Accommodations

- **Accommodations** refer to the actual teaching supports and services that the student may require to successfully demonstrate learning. Accommodations should not change expectations to the curriculum grade levels.

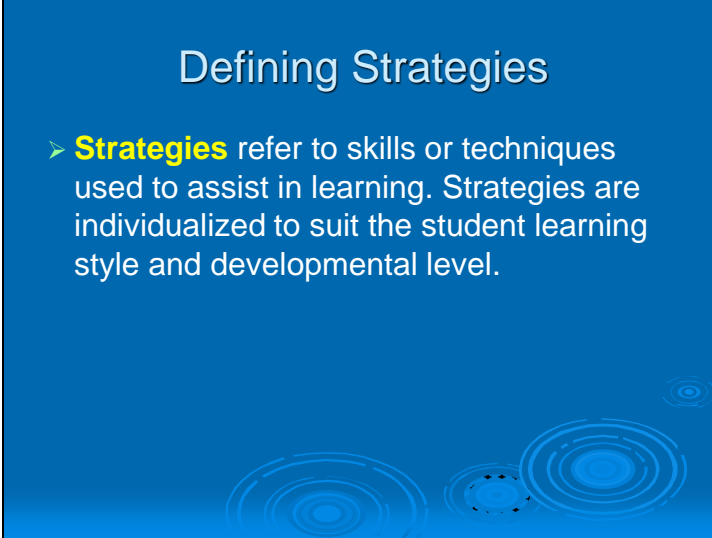
Examples of Accommodations

- taped books, math charts, additional time, preferred seating, study carrel, adapted keyboard, specialized software.

Slide 22

Defining Strategies

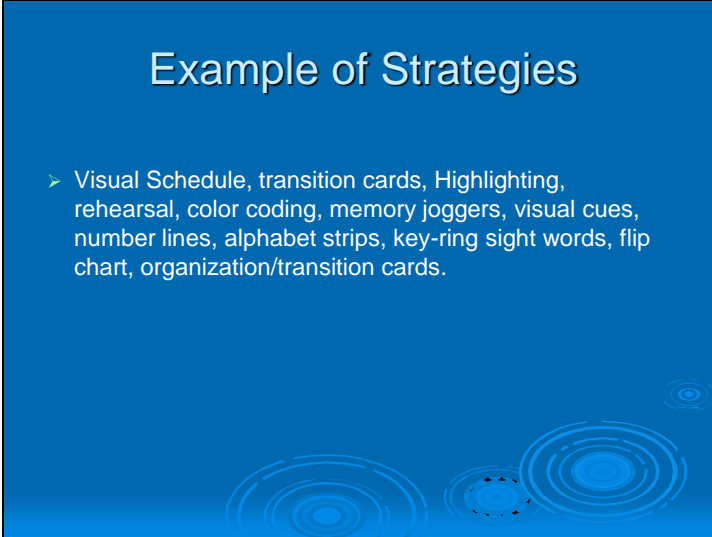
- **Strategies** refer to skills or techniques used to assist in learning. Strategies are individualized to suit the student learning style and developmental level.



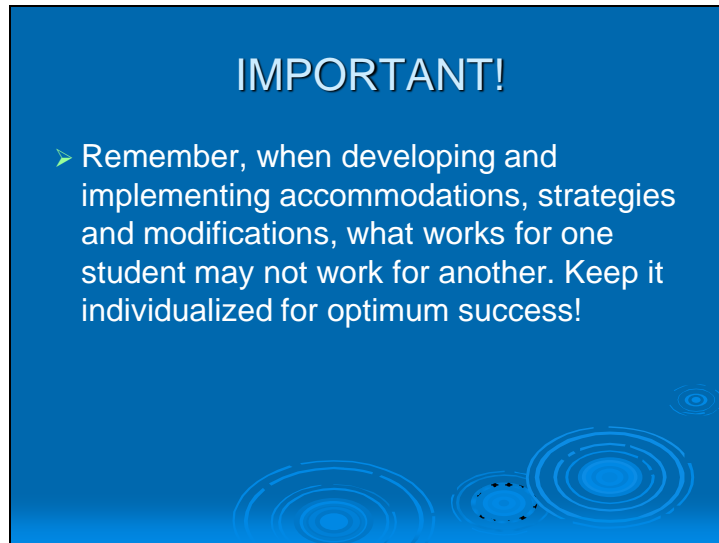
Slide 23

Example of Strategies

- Visual Schedule, transition cards, Highlighting, rehearsal, color coding, memory joggers, visual cues, number lines, alphabet strips, key-ring sight words, flip chart, organization/transition cards.



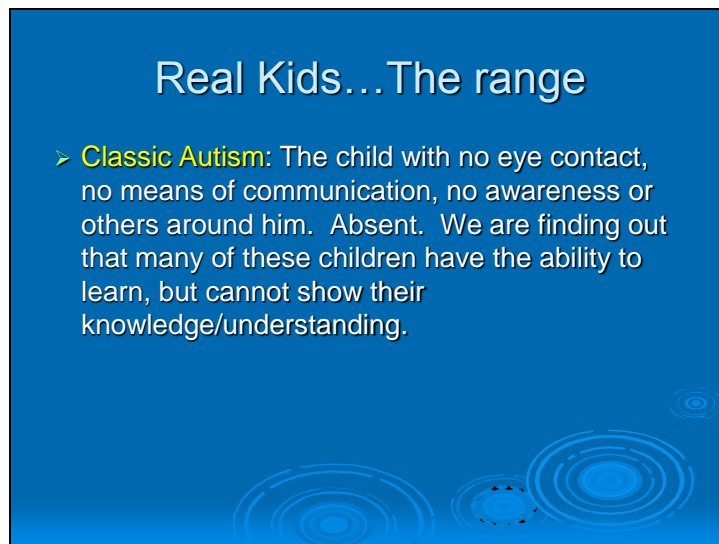
Slide 24



IMPORTANT!

- Remember, when developing and implementing accommodations, strategies and modifications, what works for one student may not work for another. Keep it individualized for optimum success!

Slide 25




Real Kids...The range

- **Classic Autism:** The child with no eye contact, no means of communication, no awareness or others around him. Absent. We are finding out that many of these children have the ability to learn, but cannot show their knowledge/understanding.

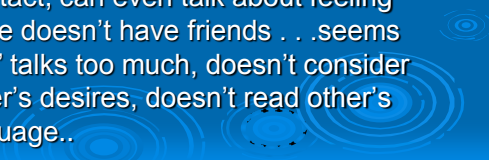
The Range of Autism...

- **Often diagnosed with PDD-NOS:** The child who is aware of others in the environment, may or may not have some words, watches, but does not interact. May or may not have academic learning issues..



The Range Continued...

- **High functioning autism:** The child who approaches others in odd, non-productive ways. Unexpected touching, standing too close, uncomfortable eye contact. Cognitive functioning is intact, but there may be areas of weakness.
- **Asperger Syndrome:** The child who desires social contact, can even talk about feeling sad that he doesn't have friends . . .seems "clueless," talks too much, doesn't consider the listener's desires, doesn't read other's body language..




Slide 28

Misconceptions

- Autistic children never have eye contact
- Autistic children don't have feelings or emotions
- Autistic children don't smile or seek physical comfort
- Autism is a mental disorder
- Autism is caused by bad parenting
- Autistic children choose to be difficult to annoy parents and teachers


Slide 29

We are talking about students who are:



- Somebody's child
- Somebody's grandchild
- Somebody's sister or brother
- Somebody who is loved and for whom many tears have been shed

Problems Understanding the Perspectives of Others.




- Can't "stand in another's shoes."
- Can't imagine what another person is thinking.
- Can't guess about how or why a person will respond/act.

Teachers often give assignments that require students to assume the role of an historical character, involving writing papers or plays or making a speech as the historical figure. Tasks of this nature are difficult for those who do not understand the human experience from different perspectives. Since persons with AS have difficulty understanding their own state of mind, they can hardly be expected to be able to imagine the state of mind of others.

Slide 31

Problems Understanding how Others Think and Feel



- May have no connection between their actions and others' reactions to them.
- Can't imagine that others think about them.
- Don't understand that others remember things about them.

Slide 32


Problems with Joint Attention and Other Social Conventions

- No sharing of attention..leads to idiosyncratic references.
- Difficulty with turn taking.
- Poor topic maintenance.
- Inappropriate eye contact.



Teacher shows the class a picture of a farm yard while talking about animals. All of the students focus on the farm animals except the child with AS. He sees a tiny electric pylon in the background and can focus on nothing else.

Difficulty Understanding Emotions



- May only understand a limited number of emotions.
- There is little understanding of subtleties.
- They have difficulty even recognizing their own feelings.


May only recognize two to three emotions along the continuum from extremely happy to very sad. A good spelling test and a new bike may exhibit the same degree of emotion.

May have difficulty understanding their own state of mind. They may be unable to recognize that they are agitated and that this agitation, unless addressed, may lead to behavior problems.

A child may cry when upset, but then try to push the tears back in, confused by his own feelings.

Difficulty explaining own behaviors

- Even highly verbal individuals will have difficulty explaining why they did something...that requires one to think about motivation and intention.



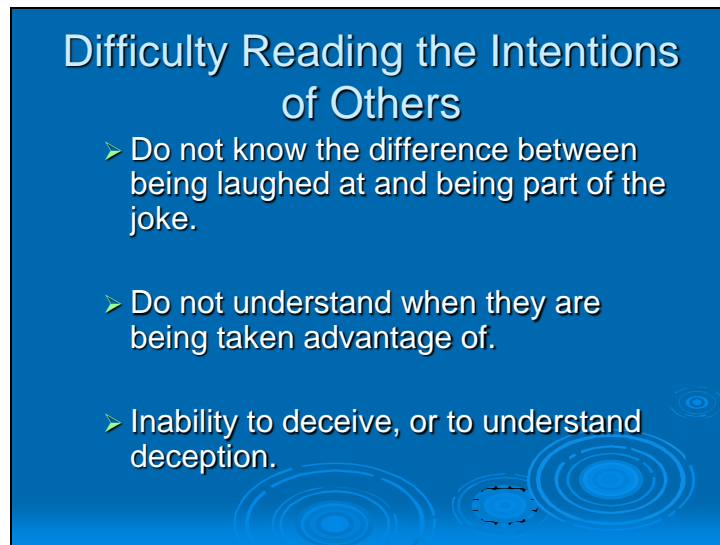
One young man alleged that a teacher had assaulted him, deliberately pushing him into a pile of chairs. He failed to say that he had been balanced on the back of a chair himself at the time, refusing to climb down...pushing the teacher away from him. When this was pointed out, he protested indignantly, “it WAS OBVIOUS. It was obvious!”

Difficulty predicting others' behavior or emotional states

- Have no idea how someone will act or feel.
- Do not see the connection between what is happening and how someone may act.
- Leads to fear and avoidance of other people.
- Preference for activities that do not depend on others.

Many of our actions and reactions are dictated by how we think others will feel. In school, when a teacher says she is not feeling well, students understand that the teacher may not be as patient as usual and that today is not a good day for practical jokes. Those with AS do not see this obvious connection between not feeling well and lack of patience. When they pull a practical joke, therefore, they are surprised by the teacher's negative response.

Slide 36



Difficulty Reading the Intentions of Others

- Do not know the difference between being laughed at and being part of the joke.
- Do not understand when they are being taken advantage of.
- Inability to deceive, or to understand deception.

Every day George would walk into the school cafeteria where he was greeted by a group of normally achieving peers. His friends routinely ask, "what's up?" Every day, George looks up to the ceiling to see what is up. The peers laugh. George thinks these boys are his friends.

Oliver, a young teenager, was quite willing (prompted by other boys) to type out salacious remarks on the school computer. He circulated copies and even read them out to the teacher. He was so pleased to have the boys' attention and be able to make them laugh. He thought that they were now his friends.

The teacher comes into the classroom to find that someone has played a prank and hidden the chalk. She asks who has done it. Martin tells her the culprit's name without hesitation.

Slide 37


Other Problems

- Difficulty Understanding 'Pretend.'
- Difficulty differentiating Fact from Fiction.
- Inability to read and react to the listener's level of interest in what is being said.
- Difficulty taking into account what other people know or can be expected to know, leading to pedantic or incomprehensible language.

Slide 38

SENSORY DIFFICULTIES

- 40% of children with autism have sensory difficulties
- Students have difficulty modulating responses to sensory input
 - Over-responsiveness
 - Under-responsiveness
- Maintaining optimal arousal & attention

A cartoon illustration of a young girl with red pigtails, wearing a pink shirt and blue pants, jumping happily on a yellow trampoline. The background of the slide features a blue gradient with faint, concentric circular patterns.

Slide 39

What Might I See These Students Do?

- They may be intimidated or over stimulated by the large numbers of other students.
- They may be confused by the movement of others.
- They may become disoriented.
- They may be overwhelmed by the sounds of others (especially in the cafeteria/gymnasium).

Slide 40

What Might I See These Students Do?

- They may be uncomfortable in hallways if they are brushed up against by others.
- They may do unusual things such as rub their hands on the walls, hold their bodies in strange positions, touch others inappropriately or make unusual sounds.
- They may cry or scream for no apparent reason.
- They may walk through groups of students.

Slide 41

What Might I See These Students Do?

- Isolate themselves completely.
- May be overly “friendly” and have very poor boundaries or social skills.
- Talk obsessively about the same topic to anyone (or no one).
- Tell others inappropriate things such as, “you are too fat.” “you have a bugger on your nose.” “My mom says that you are stupid.”

Slide 42

Why?????

Because.....

- Their **sensory systems** are disordered...some senses are overly acute, some are under reactive. Touch may HURT, movement around may disorient.
- They do not interpret **social information**...they may not realize that three people talking together are in a group...may be unable to read facial expressions and body language...may not recognize unkind behavior.

Slide 43

- **Language is disordered.** They may not understand even simple directions or questions. They may be unable to respond with words to even the simplest requests.
- They strongly desire for things to remain **predictable** and familiar so they may do things that are repetitive and familiar even if there doesn't seem to be a reason for the action or behavior.

Slide 44

- ### How can we work together as a team?
- Parents and teachers could work together to create an info sheet for each student that could be given to every adult on campus. Adults such as bus drivers, cafeteria workers, yard duty staff, office staff, etc. who are most likely to come into contact with students could even keep the sheet with them on a clip board.
 - More sophisticated students could write their own info sheets with some guidance.

Slide 45

Suggested Info Sheet for a lower functioning student

Name : Robert Oliver

I like to be called Robbie


Please don't touch me when I am upset

If I am crying or screaming, I will usually stop if you tell me, "Robbie, go library." I love to look at books about dinosaurs.

If I come and stand by you on the campus, it is because I feel safe with you.

If I start to smell your hair, I am telling you that I like you. Put your hand up and say, "No smell hair." You might have to do it more than once


I understand very little speech. Say my name and then say, "come," or "stop," or "no."



Slide 46

Suggested Info Sheet for a Higher Functioning Student

- My name is Brad Johnson. I am 15 years old.
- I am very intelligent and love to talk about things that interest me. These include: Dairy cows; Star Wars; the Civil War battles and the California Gold Rush. If you want me to stop talking about one of these topics, please tell me that you want to talk about something else.
- Please don't make me look at you when you are talking to me. It makes me very anxious.
- I understand that when I am challenged, I can get very verbally aggressive. This often leads to trouble with peers. If you hear this happening, please tell me to, "choose your battles carefully."
- If I am standing too close to you, please tell me to back up a little.
- When I am very upset, it is hard for me to listen, talk or cooperate. Please tell me to find a place to sit so that I can calm down. I will try to do it.



What about behavior problems?

- The first rule in supporting students is to provide the structure, predictability and level of visual support that they require while supporting their communication, social and sensory needs.
- In general, when there is a problem....refer to the next slide.

Be Gentle During a Crisis

- Lower your voice
- Be calm
- Be comforting
- Talk less-be concrete
- Have a soft, relaxed body posture
- Have a neutral facial expression



Slide 49

Adult behaviors that can Escalate a Crisis

No No's!!

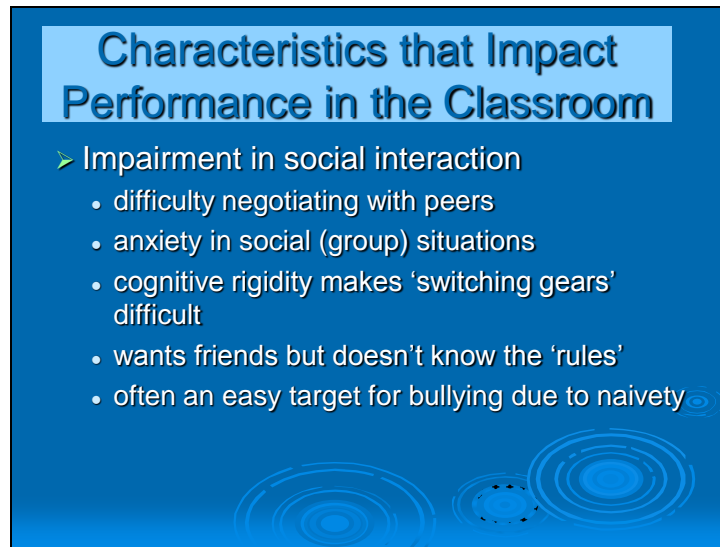
- Raising voice/yelling
- Preaching
- Backing a student into a corner
- Using tense body language
- Using sarcasm
- accusing
- Insisting on having the last word.
- Holding a grudge
- Acting superior
- Using physical force
- Mimicking the child
- Commanding, dominating
- Insulting
- Nagging
- Humiliating
- Making comparisons with other
- Confiscation of preferred or comforting object or activity

Slide 50

Characteristics that Impact Performance in the Classroom

- Impairment in communication
 - Literal use of language
 - confused by expressions—"cat got your tongue"
 - confused by shades of meaning/ambiguity
 - expansive vocabulary often hides poor understanding
 - Impairment in language 'pragmatics'
 - lack of reciprocity in conversation--talks 'at you'
 - misses non-verbal cues (body language)

AS is often termed "little professor" syndrome. In effect people with AS have language, but not the innate understanding to use language effectively in social interaction. This is called language pragmatics and can be evaluated by Speech/Language Pathologists. A thorough paper on semantic/pragmatic disorder can be found at: <http://www.hyperlexia.org/sp1.html>



Characteristics that Impact Performance in the Classroom

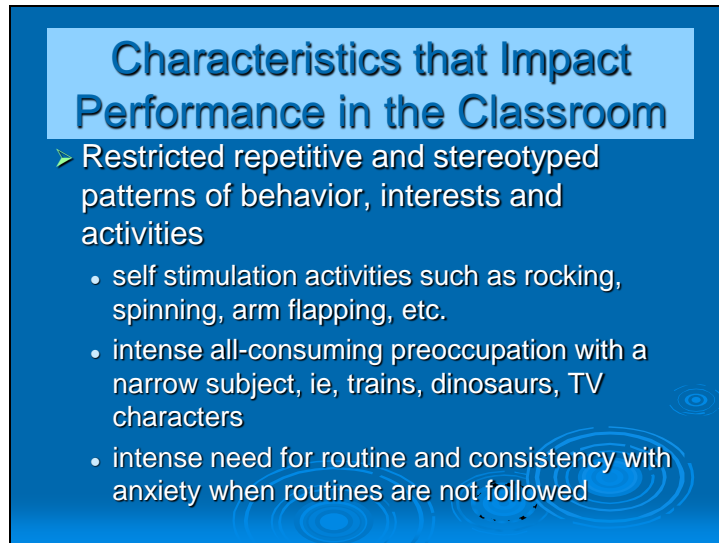
- Impairment in social interaction
 - difficulty negotiating with peers
 - anxiety in social (group) situations
 - cognitive rigidity makes 'switching gears' difficult
 - wants friends but doesn't know the 'rules'
 - often an easy target for bullying due to naivety

In one on one situations with adults, you might never pick P. out as a kid who struggles with friendships. He is charming, friendly, and eager for interaction. In a group situation with peers, particularly one that is not structured (eg, lunch, recess), he doesn't know what to do. We have noticed that P. is likely to choose the most noticeable behavior to mimic in social situations. Unfortunately, he almost always ends up mimicking the most poorly and/or inappropriately behaved child in a group. And then P. is the one who gets in trouble.

This year, we are struggling with how P. responds to emotionally charged situations. At home and at school, when he perceives a confrontation or an injustice, he responds with a pure adrenaline reaction and has been fleeing from situations. He has bolted out of school, the playground, and in the neighborhood on his bicycle. This is a significant safety issue that we are struggling to address.

P. also has a hard time knowing the difference between friendly teasing and malicious teasing.

Slide 52

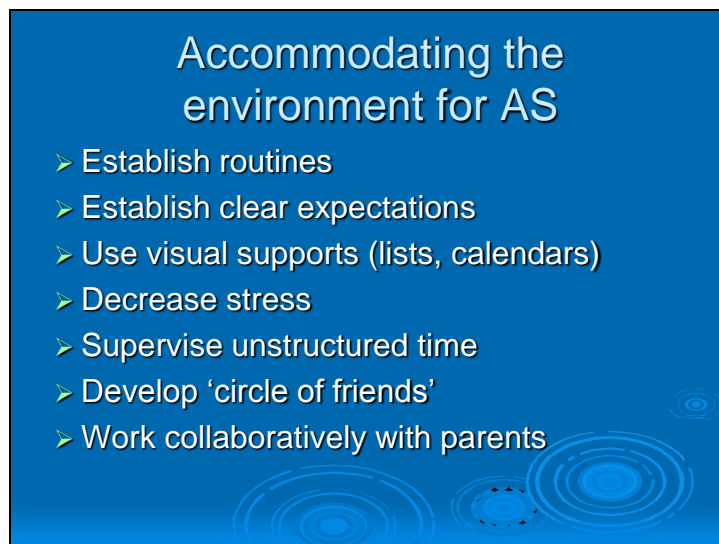


Characteristics that Impact Performance in the Classroom

- Restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests and activities
 - self stimulation activities such as rocking, spinning, arm flapping, etc.
 - intense all-consuming preoccupation with a narrow subject, ie, trains, dinosaurs, TV characters
 - intense need for routine and consistency with anxiety when routines are not followed

We have learned to preview any routine changes with P. in advance. We use the kitchen calendar for significant events and he has learned to check it.

Slide 53



Accommodating the environment for AS

- Establish routines
- Establish clear expectations
- Use visual supports (lists, calendars)
- Decrease stress
- Supervise unstructured time
- Develop 'circle of friends'
- Work collaboratively with parents

Slide 54

Use of class rules-clear expectations

- Concrete rules for the class/group
 - Displayed prominently
 - Referred to frequently (“Our rule is. . .”)
 - Adapted when needed, with advanced notice/warning
- Clearly state expectations. Make directions explicit.

Slide 55

Visual supports and schedules

- Individual written schedule (daily/weekly)
- Visual sequencing of tasks
- Visual calendars
- Written/drawn notification of change

10 Things Every Child With Autism Wishes You Knew

➤ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIEWE04cEAo&feature=related>

Slide 1



Autism Spectrum Disorders



Tools and Strategies

Created and presented by:
Mary Stone, ECSE, MS

The slide features a dark blue background with a repeating pattern of lighter blue circles. The text is centered in white, and the puzzle heart icon is also centered.

Slide 2



Let's Review

- Tell me some things you know about students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.




The slide features a dark blue background with a repeating pattern of lighter blue circles. The text is centered in white, and the illustration of two women is centered at the bottom.

Slide 3

Is it Autism or behavior?

- The answer is yes to both!
- When we are trying to interpret what an individual with ASD is trying to communicate, we cannot separate their Autism from their behavior.

A 3D illustration showing two small, orange, humanoid figures standing on a white surface. They are positioned on either side of a large, grey, multi-part puzzle piece. The figures appear to be pushing or pulling the puzzle piece together, symbolizing the integration of different elements or the complexity of understanding behavior in individuals with ASD.

Slide 4

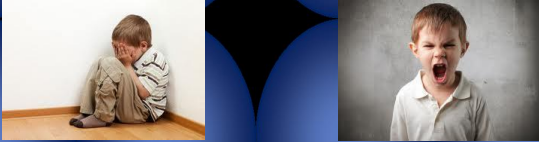
Interpreting Behaviors

- What do you see?
- What do you think the behavior means?
- What would you like to see instead?
- As teachers you will need to think about these questions throughout week.

Slide 5

BEHAVIOR HAS MEANING!!!


- **IMPORTANT...Behavior has meaning!** Your job is to figure out why the behavior is happening. What does the behavior mean? I am hungry, I need a break, I am tired, I need a squeeze?



Slide 6

Step One




- Help individual to recognize when they need a break.



Slide 7

What a break card may look like!


- I Need Break card

I need help 	I need a break 	I need a break 
--	---	--

Slide 8

Other Ideas...Use a High Interest Character

I Need Break



Slide 9

I Need a Break Social Story

- <http://portal.esc20.net/portal/page/portal/doclibraryroot/publicpages/SpecialEducation/autism/autismsocstories/NeedBreak.pdf>

Slide 10

Recovering from Sensory Overload

- Have student lay down on a beanbag or on the floor. Researchers believe this can help an individual recover when they have sensory overload.



Slide 11

Where do you start? How do you figure this out?

- Start with a few deep breaths. Maybe have the student do the same.
- First look at common issues for students on the Autism Spectrum.

Slide 12


Common Issues for Students with ASD

- **Environment: physical arrangement and predictability.**
 - Does the task/lesson make sense to the student. Can they predict why they are involved?
 - Can student predict sequence of steps in the lesson?
 - Can the student predict when/how it will work?

Slide 13

Exercise

- What can you do as a team to make the environment predictable? There are prizes for good answers!

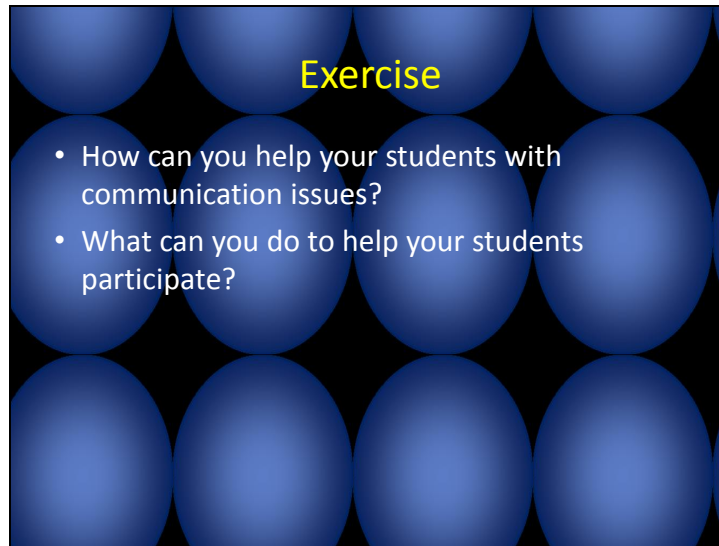
A cartoon illustration of a young girl with dark hair, wearing a green shirt and a blue skirt, holding a large, golden trophy. The trophy has the words "BIG PRIZE" written on it in a stylized font. The trophy is on a square base. The background of the slide is a dark blue pattern of overlapping circles.

Slide 14

More Common Issues.....

- **Communication and Social Participation:**
 - Does the student have a way verbally or non-verbally to participate in the lesson?
 - Does the student know how to ask for help/how to respond to a question/how to answer a question?
 - Many students with ASD need extra processing time to answer a question.

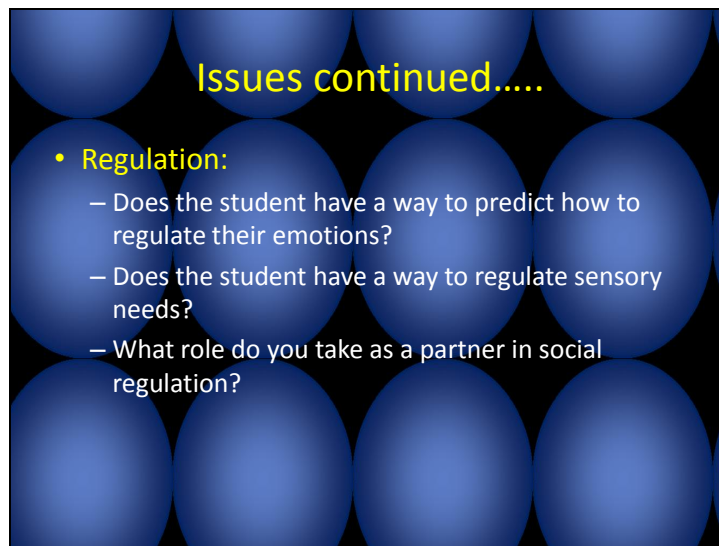
Slide 15

The slide features a dark blue background with a repeating pattern of lighter blue circles. The word "Exercise" is centered at the top in a yellow font. Below it, two bullet points are listed in white text.

Exercise

- How can you help your students with communication issues?
- What can you do to help your students participate?

Slide 16

The slide features a dark blue background with a repeating pattern of lighter blue circles. The text "Issues continued...." is centered at the top in a yellow font. Below it, a section titled "Regulation:" is followed by three bullet points in white text.

Issues continued....

- **Regulation:**
 - Does the student have a way to predict how to regulate their emotions?
 - Does the student have a way to regulate sensory needs?
 - What role do you take as a partner in social regulation?


Slide 17

Exercise

- How will you help your student with regulation issues?

Slide 18

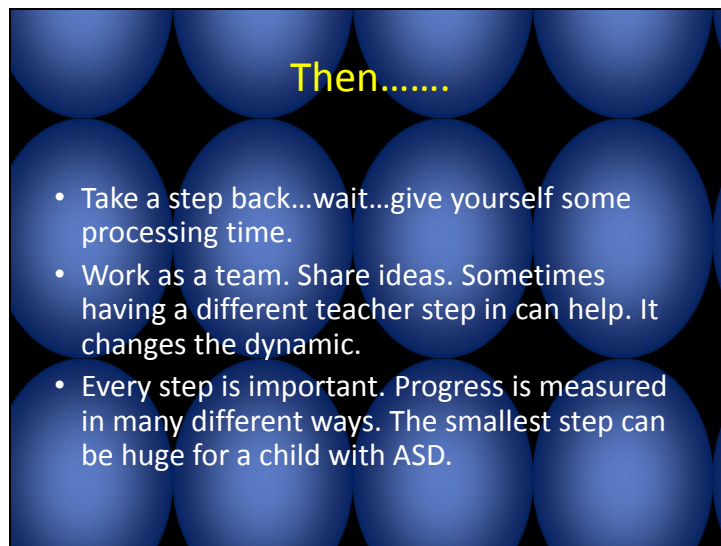
What if you have sensory overload?



Slide 19




Slide 20



Slide 21

Strategies and Tools for your Teaching Toolbox

- Use gestures and demonstrate and provide physical prompts, use visual cues.
- Be organized, help learner organize.
- Be direct, be clear, be consistent.
- Keep motor patterns predictable.
- Reinforce!

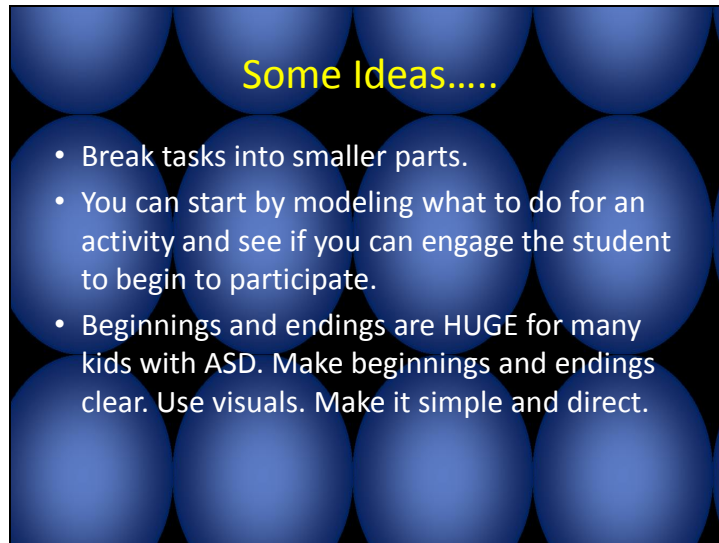


Slide 22

More tools...

- Have very clear beginnings and endings to activities, teach routines.
- Have visual and auditory cues for time issues, picture schedules, written schedules.
- Use concrete visuals to illustrate concepts, relate concepts to personal experience.
- Give time to respond, may need physical cues to begin.

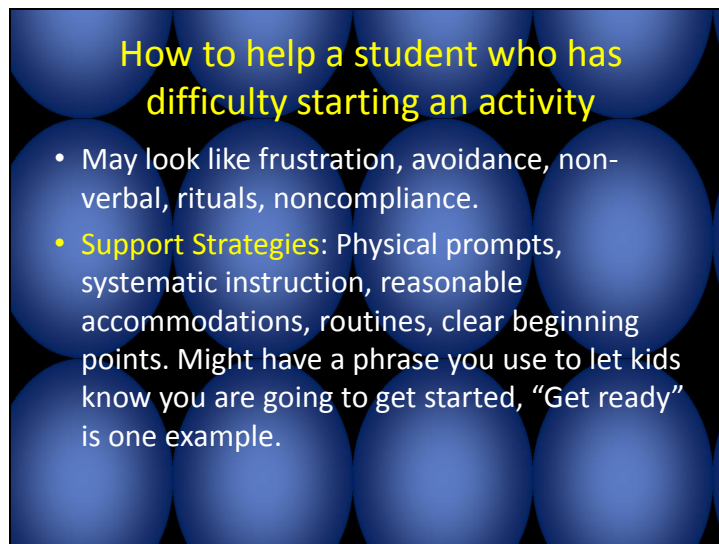
Slide 23



Some Ideas.....

- Break tasks into smaller parts.
- You can start by modeling what to do for an activity and see if you can engage the student to begin to participate.
- Beginnings and endings are HUGE for many kids with ASD. Make beginnings and endings clear. Use visuals. Make it simple and direct.

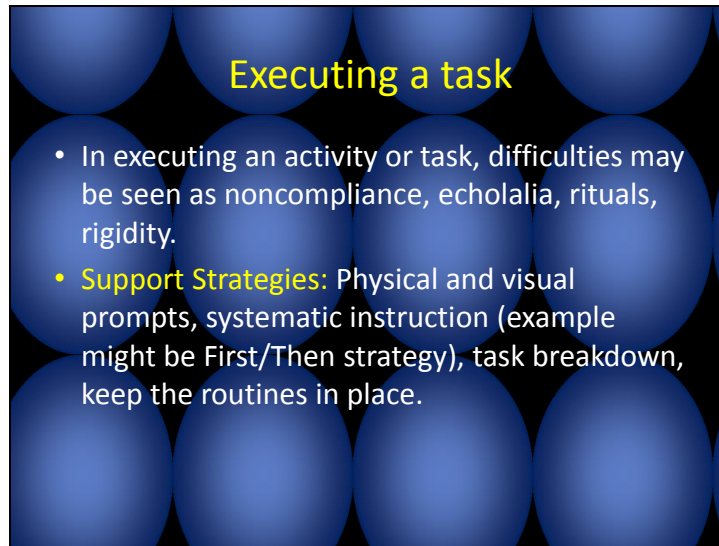
Slide 24



How to help a student who has difficulty starting an activity

- May look like frustration, avoidance, non-verbal, rituals, noncompliance.
- **Support Strategies:** Physical prompts, systematic instruction, reasonable accommodations, routines, clear beginning points. Might have a phrase you use to let kids know you are going to get started, "Get ready" is one example.

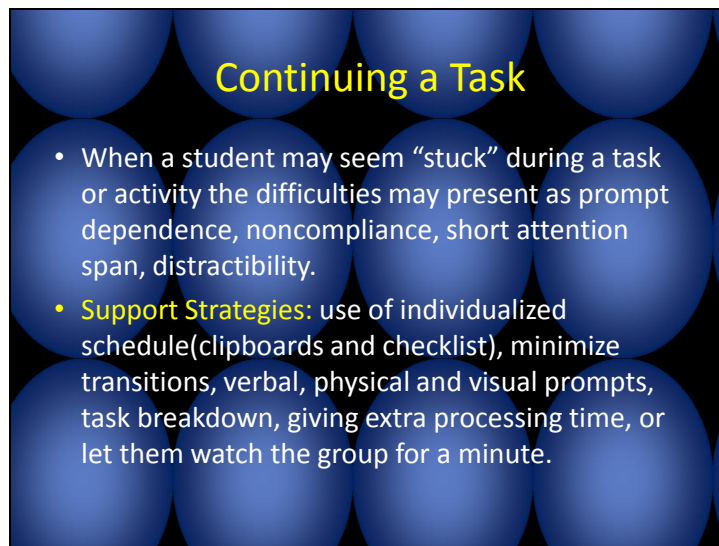
Slide 25

The slide features a dark blue background with a pattern of lighter blue circles. The title "Executing a task" is centered at the top in a yellow font. Below the title, there are two bullet points in white text. The first bullet point describes difficulties in task execution, and the second bullet point lists support strategies.

Executing a task

- In executing an activity or task, difficulties may be seen as noncompliance, echolalia, rituals, rigidity.
- **Support Strategies:** Physical and visual prompts, systematic instruction (example might be First/Then strategy), task breakdown, keep the routines in place.

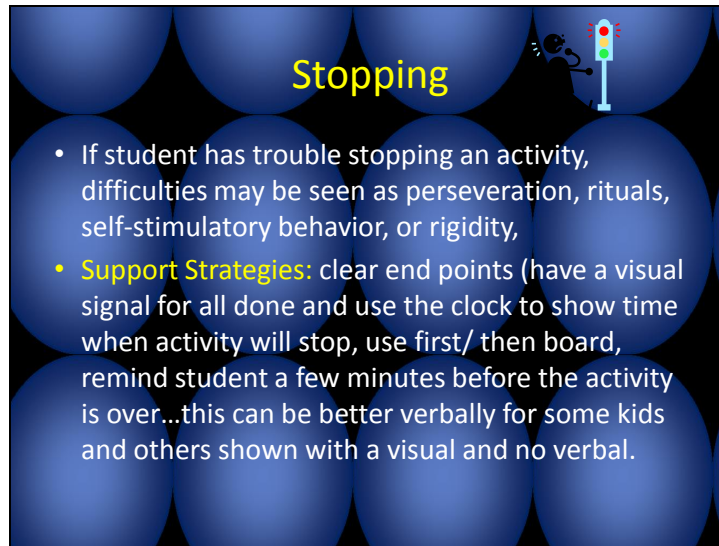
Slide 26

The slide features a dark blue background with a pattern of lighter blue circles. The title "Continuing a Task" is centered at the top in a yellow font. Below the title, there are two bullet points in white text. The first bullet point describes difficulties in continuing a task, and the second bullet point lists support strategies.

Continuing a Task

- When a student may seem “stuck” during a task or activity the difficulties may present as prompt dependence, noncompliance, short attention span, distractibility.
- **Support Strategies:** use of individualized schedule (clipboards and checklist), minimize transitions, verbal, physical and visual prompts, task breakdown, giving extra processing time, or let them watch the group for a minute.

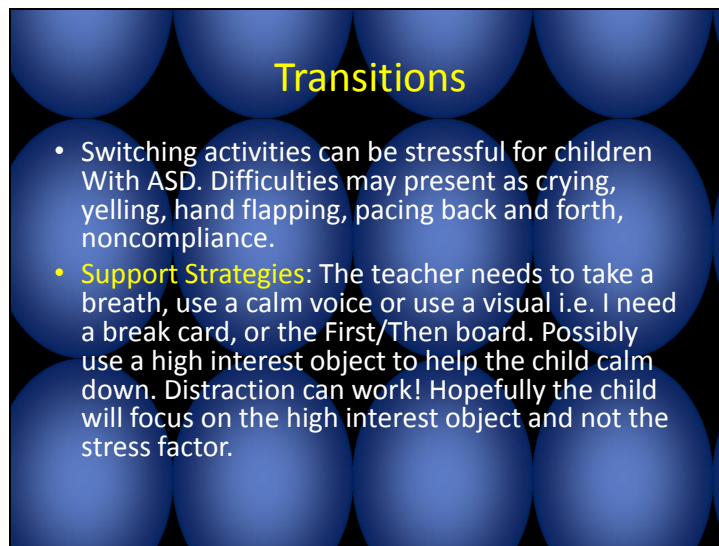
Slide 27



Stopping

- If student has trouble stopping an activity, difficulties may be seen as perseveration, rituals, self-stimulatory behavior, or rigidity,
- **Support Strategies:** clear end points (have a visual signal for all done and use the clock to show time when activity will stop, use first/ then board, remind student a few minutes before the activity is over...this can be better verbally for some kids and others shown with a visual and no verbal.

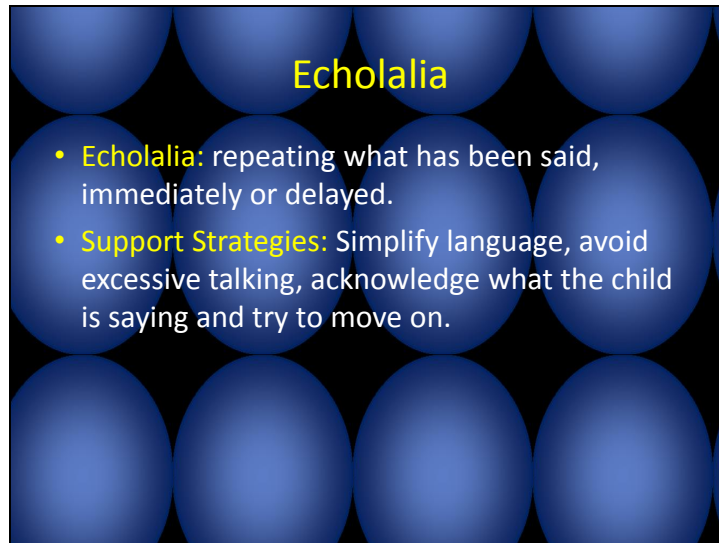
Slide 28



Transitions

- Switching activities can be stressful for children With ASD. Difficulties may present as crying, yelling, hand flapping, pacing back and forth, noncompliance.
- **Support Strategies:** The teacher needs to take a breath, use a calm voice or use a visual i.e. I need a break card, or the First/Then board. Possibly use a high interest object to help the child calm down. Distraction can work! Hopefully the child will focus on the high interest object and not the stress factor.

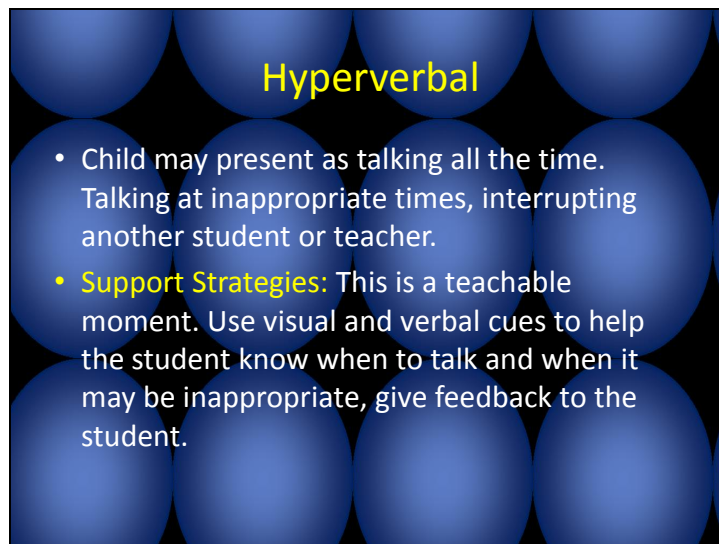
Slide 29



Echolalia

- **Echolalia:** repeating what has been said, immediately or delayed.
- **Support Strategies:** Simplify language, avoid excessive talking, acknowledge what the child is saying and try to move on.

Slide 30



Hyperverbal

- Child may present as talking all the time. Talking at inappropriate times, interrupting another student or teacher.
- **Support Strategies:** This is a teachable moment. Use visual and verbal cues to help the student know when to talk and when it may be inappropriate, give feedback to the student.

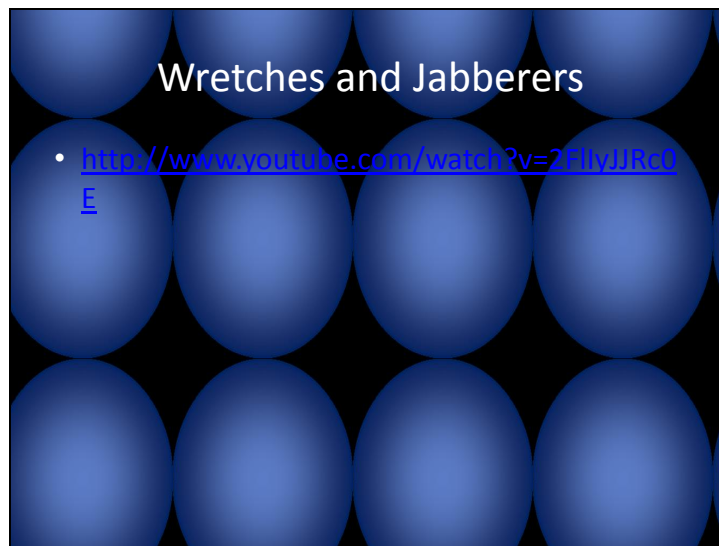
Slide 31



Self-Stimulatory Behavior

- **Support Strategies:** Find activities that incorporate learners movements, reduce or increase other stimulation, teach when and where behavior is okay, use prompts and cues to reduce the frequency of the behaviors.

Slide 32



Wretches and Jabberers

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FllyJJRc0E>


Slide 33

Be Inspired!

- “When we do the best that we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another.”
[Helen Keller](#)

Slide 34

Final Thoughts...be the fish on the right!



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APPENDIX C

PARTICIPENT RESOURCES

Sensory Room Examples

This sensory room is painted in pastel colors and is very light and fun with lots of tactile and visual stimulation.



Source: Casdok, . "Sensory Rooms." *Mother of Shrek*:. Blogger, 23 May 2011. Web. Web. 8 Feb. 2013. <<http://motherofshrek.blogspot.com/2011/05/sensory-rooms.html>>.

This sensory room is referred to as a “white” sensory room. It is simpler and has both visual and tactile stimulants but is much lighter.



Source: Casdok, . "Sensory Rooms." *Mother of Shrek*:. Blogger, 23 May 2011.

Web. Web. 8 Feb. 2013. <<http://motherofshrek.blogspot.com/2011/05/sensory-rooms.html>>.

This sensory room is called a “dark” room. It goes in a much different direction allowing for a wonderful mix of stimulants that are not only fun but completely different from the other examples.



Source: Casdok, . "Sensory Rooms." *Mother of Shrek*. Blogger, 23 May 2011. Web. Web. 8 Feb. 2013. <<http://motherofshrek.blogspot.com/2011/05/sensory-rooms.html>>.

As I said earlier, the above rooms would be considered high end rooms. This room on the other hand is one that might be much more manageable for a program just starting out. It is light very simple and easily movable. Mobility is something that beginning programs will want to consider as the space you dedicate as your sensory room may be used for other things as well.



Source: Meena, Kathy. *Sensory Room-Meena-after-pic 10*. 2011. My Special Needs NetworkWeb. 8 Feb 2013.

<<http://www.myspecialneedsnetwork.com/photo/sensory-room-meena-after-pic-9/prev?context=latest>>.

These are just a few examples of sensory rooms that you could create.

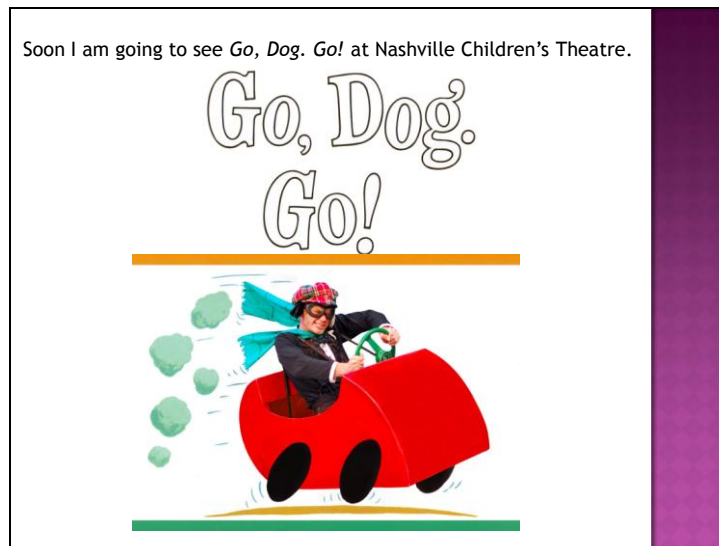
Social Stories I created for Nashville Children's Theatre's production of *Go, Dog.*

Go!

Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3

Seeing a play is a little like seeing something on TV, or a movie. But the people in a play are right there on stage. They are called Actors.



Slide 4

Go, Dog. Go! is a special kind of show it is a play with music. The actors will tell the story by talking, singing, and dancing.



Slide 5

Go, Dog. Go! is at the Nashville Children's Theatre. When I get there, I will see a sign that says "Nashville Children's Theatre". It looks like this:



Slide 6

When I enter Nashville Children's Theatre I will be in the Lobby. The lobby looks like this:



Slide 7

Next, we might have to go to the Box Office to get our tickets. We may have to stand in line and wait. I will stand nicely and quietly while we wait.



Slide 8



If I need to go to the bathroom, I will let my mom or dad know and they can take me. I can go to the bathroom any time I need to.



If I am thirsty I can also get a drink from the water fountain.

Slide 9

Before the show there will be different activities that I can do in the lobby. I don't have to participate if I don't want to.



Slide 10

When it's time to go into the theatre, there may be a line at the door. I will wait in line for my turn to go through the door.



Slide 11

An usher will scan my ticket.



Seating is General Admission. That means that me and my family can sit in any seat that is open.

Slide 12

When we get to our seats, I will sit down. I will sit in a booster seat if I need one to see the show.



During the show I will sit with my family. There may be some people I don't know sitting close to me. That is ok. They are here to see the show too!

Slide 13

After I have sat down, people might need to walk in front of me to get to their seats. They may accidentally touch me while they walk pass me. That is ok.



Slide 14

When the show is about to start, somebody will come to the stage and make an announcement.



Slide 15

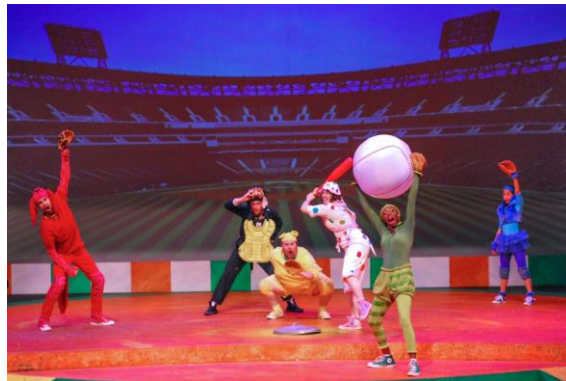
Sometimes the actors might be in the aisle near my seat. If I don't want to talk to them, I don't have to.



Sometimes the actors might invite us to participate. I can participate if I want to or I can just watch and listen. Other people around me may decide to participate.


Slide 16

During the show the actors will play Baseball with a giant blow-up baseball. The ball will go into the audience. The ball might touch me and that's ok. I can participate and hit the ball or I can sit quietly until the baseball game is over.




Slide 17

If the music is too loud for me I can cover my ears, put on my headphones, or hug my mom or dad.




If I am feeling nervous I can cover my eyes, hold my mom or dad's hand, or hug my mom or dad.




Slide 18

Sometimes I may think the show is a little surprising. An usher near the stage will hold up an orange light when they know something surprising is about to happen.



If I'm feeling scared, I can cover my ears or eyes, hold my mom or dad's hand, or hug my mom or dad until the surprising part is over.



Slide 19

If most of the show is too loud for me I will tell my mom or dad and they can take me to the comfort room in the back of the theatre. I will still be able to see the show but it won't be as loud.



If I need a break from watching the show I can tell my mom or dad and they can take me to the lobby. I can come back in when I am ready.

Slide 20

If I see something that I like or think is funny I can clap my hands or laugh. Others sitting by me might clap and laugh at things. If this sound is too loud for me I can cover my ears.



Slide 21

I will know the show is over when the actors bow. If I liked the show I can clap my hands. People around me will clap their hands. This sound might be loud, but it won't last for very long. If it is too loud I can cover my ears until it is over.



Slide 22

When the show is over, everyone will leave the theatre. The aisle may be crowded as everyone exits. I will wait my turn to use the aisle and exit through the doors.



Slide 23

I like coming to Nashville Children's Theatre. I hope I can come back again soon!



Slide 24

NASHVILLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE'S
CONTACT INFORMATION

Address: 25 Middleton St.
Nashville, TN 32710

Phone: 615-254-9103 Fax: 615-254-3255

General Email:

info@nashvillechildrenstheatre.org

Website:

www.nashvillechildrenstheatre.org



Slide 25

The slide features a vertical banner on the left with the text "NASHVILLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE" in white, bold, sans-serif font. The banner has a background of stylized, overlapping circular patterns in shades of grey and black. To the right of the banner is a purple rectangular area with a faint, intricate pattern. This area contains the text "2013-2014 Sensory Friendly Performances" in white, followed by a list of six performances, each with its title in italics and date and time in white text.

2013-2014 Sensory Friendly Performances

A Wrinkle in Time:
Saturday September 21, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Schoolhouse Rock Live!:
Saturday November 2, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse:
Saturday January 25, 2014 at 2:00 pm

Number the Stars:
Saturday March 1, 2014 at 2:00 pm

Lyle the Crocodile:
Saturday April 19, 2014 at 2:00 pm

Go, Dog. Go!

The actors will tell the story by talking, singing, and dancing. Sometimes the music will be loud.



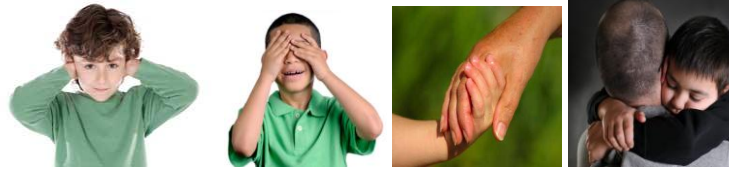
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I will know the show is over when the actors bow. If I liked the show I can clap my hands. People around me will clap their hands. This sound might be loud, but it won't last for very long. If it is too loud I can cover my ears until it is over.



Visual Schedule

Here is an example of a more elaborate visual schedule. This style of visual schedule allows you to change on a daily basis.



Source: *Back to School Visual Aides*. N.d. Coffee and Courage: Learning to Live with AutismWeb. 8 Feb 2013.

<<http://courageandcoffee.blogspot.com/2012/08/back-to-school-visual-aids.html>>.