



# The Southeast ASD Scoop

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I had the privilege to hear Dr. Jed Baker present at the Autism Action Partnership Conference in Omaha at the beginning of November. The title of his presentation was “No More Meltdowns”. I, along with most of the other participants, expected a presentation in which Dr. Baker would share ideas on how to prevent and handle a meltdown. Everyone in the audience came home with several suggestions and ideas in regards to meltdowns, but one specific concept really resonated with me. That concept was the importance of positive relationships.

Before even discussing any strategies or ideas to help with meltdowns, Dr. Baker emphasized the importance of having and keeping a positive relationship with our students.

We all know that keeping a positive relationship with our students

## Be the One in Control

can be difficult when we experience behavior that seems to be rude or non-compliant. We often forget to think about the relationship with our students and if they are becoming negative.

As educators, we tend to have our own agendas when it comes to behavior. Those agendas are typically driven by the pressure of making sure that all of your students are learning, and when behavior is occurring, it’s hard to make sure your students are learning. When dealing with behaviors, the first thing that we often think about is how to control our students behaviors or what strategies we need to put into place so they do not happen again.

In reality, instead of thinking about how to control our student’s behavior, we need to first be thinking of how to control our own behavior, not our student’s.

Most adults do not like the feeling of not being in control of a situation. We often express that by showing the frustration that we are feeling. Our voices raise, we put more demands on a student or even remove them from the environment. Constantly feeling frustrated breaks down the relationship you have with your students. The more frustrated you become, the more behaviors you will often see from your students, and you will often feel their behavior is a sign of disrespect.

When it comes to the respect issue, Dr. Baker said “You get respect for handling your behavior; not for being able to control your student’s behavior.” Think about that for a moment. Sometimes, if you constantly yell or demand students to change their behavior, they may listen to you. However, will your students respect you for yelling and will your relationship with your student suffer?

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## Thank you for attending the SE ASD Fall Symposium!



We had over 300 participants from across the state attend our first Southeast ASD Fall Symposium!

Thursday, October 21st, Emily Iland presented on reading comprehension and autism. Information was given on the characteristics of autism and how they affect reading comprehension. A list of

30 critical skills to teach was also presented, along with various strategies. Emily’s new book “Drawing a Blank: Reading Comprehension and Good Decoders with Autism Spectrum Disorders” will be available soon through the Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

Friday, October 22nd was also a

huge success. Jill Kuzma presented on teaching social/emotional strategies to students with ASD. Many great ideas and strategies were presented throughout the day-long presentation. Check out Jill’s blog online for a ton of great resources on social/emotional strategies!

<http://jillkuzma.wordpress.com>

“I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized.”

Dr. Haim Ginott, 1971



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On the other hand, if you are able to control your emotions and your behavior, do you think that your students will respect you more since you are not yelling and demanding a specific behavior?

You may be out of ideas on what to do to help build a positive relationship with your students. Dr. Baker, in his book “No More Meltdowns”, lists three ways that as adults, we can help control the frustration we feel, which in turn will help develop a positive relationship with our student.

The first step is to accept that we will see behaviors from our students, especially from those on the autism spectrum. We need to expect that behaviors will happen, even possibly on a daily basis. It is typical of any student, no matter if they have a disability or not, to exhibit some sort of behavior. When we expect students to have a perfect day at school or in your classroom, you are just setting yourself to be frustrated.

Secondly, we need to make sure that we do not take behavior personally or see it as a disrespectful action. When we take behavior personally, our feelings toward that student or even towards our job can sometimes turn negative.

## Be the One in Control

We become upset and this in turn, affects our response to the student. Our patience is gone and we often will respond in frustration. This is especially important when working with students with Asperger Syndrome. Often time, these students lack tact and appear to be rude and disrespectful. Teachers often see that as an act of defiance and in turn, engage in a power struggle, trying to make sure that the student learns that they need to respect the teacher. These situations and behaviors are a result of the student’s inability to cope with their feeling, inability to label the emotions or respond in an appropriate way. As the adult in the situation, we need to forget about the “respect” issue and focus our energy back on remaining calm and remembering that the behavior is the majority of the time due to the student’s lack of skills. It is our job then to teach appropriate coping skills to those students.

Lastly, when we deal with these behaviors, we need to remember that challenging behaviors are temporary until we can teach the students the skills they need to have prevent these meltdowns from occurring. We need to learn the behaviors that cause us frustration and plan for those situa-

tions, so we are able to stay calm.

When we really take the time to focus and practice these three steps, you will see a difference in your student’s behavior and their reactions to your responses. Often times by just staying calm, not getting frustrated or engaging in a power struggle, student’s behavior will improve.

Remember, as the adult in your classroom, you are responsible for controlling your behavior and your response to student behavior. Continue to work on building relationships with your students to make your classroom a more positive place to be.

“No More Meltdowns” by Dr. Jed Baker (2008), *Future Horizons*, is available for checkout in the ASD Library at ESU 6.



## Sensory Suggestions

Sensory needs are very common in students on the autism spectrum. If sensory needs are not addressed, students are not able to regulate their bodies, thus increasing the likelihood of behaviors. Starting with this issue, each month a sensory system will be highlighted and explained. Activities to address these sensory needs will be included. Please consult with your Occupational Therapist before implementing any of these sensory activities with your student.

Sensory System: Proprioception, or body awareness

Location of this system: Muscles and joints—

it is activated by muscle contractions and movement

Function: The proprioceptive system provides information about where a specific body part is and how it is moving. For example, sitting in a chair is a proprioceptive activity. Our joints and muscles give us feedback when we are sitting. If a student’s proprioceptive system is different, you may see the student fall out or tip out of a chair when sitting.

Activities to address this system:

- Heavy work activities—carrying, pushing, pulling heavy things

- Riding a stationary bike with high resistance
- Scooter board
- Tricycle pedaling with high resistance
- Vigorous jumping (trampoline, jumping jacks, jumping rope, etc).
- Vigorous Wii game playing with movement, Dance Dance Revolution

Suggestions taken from: “Practical Solutions for Stabilizing Students with Classic Autism to Be Reading to Learn: Getting to Go!” by Judy Endow, MSW. (2010) Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

## Autism and the Very Young Child

Birth to 3 Year Olds

**Date:** December 10, 2010

**Time:** 9:00-3:00

**Location:** ESU #6 Milford

**Light breakfast and Lunch is provided**

**Cost: Free**

**Presenters:** Teri McGill, Metro Region ASD Coordinator and Melissa Trautman, Southeast Region ASD Coordinator

### **Audience:**

Early Childhood Special Education Teachers (Birth- Three)

ECSE Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapists

Psychologists

Head Start/Excite Teachers, and Early Childhood Providers,

Parents/Family Members

Administrators, and Service Coordinators

Other professionals working with very young children in a home or community childcare center who maybe displaying early red flags of ASD.

### **Participants will learn:**

An overview of ASD characteristics for young children

Early “Red Flags” for young children and ASD

Key curriculum components and strategies for teaching very young children with ASD. These include:

Imitation

Joint attention

Intentional Communication

Social Turn-Taking

Beginning Play Skills

\*This workshop is Co- sponsored by the Southeast Region and Metro Region.

Please register by logging onto <http://www.esu6.org>. Click on the “event registration” link in the top left hand corner. Follow the instructions as indicated.

**Deadlines for registration: December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010**

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### Check Us Out on the Web !

<http://unl.edu/asdnetwork>

[http://www.esu6.org/services/asd\\_home.htm](http://www.esu6.org/services/asd_home.htm)

<http://seasdnetwork.wordpress.com>

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

The 2011 Nebraska ASD Conference will be April 7th and 8th, 2011 at the Embassy Suites in La-Vista.

Our Keynote Speaker is

Michelle Garcia Winner!