



N E B R A S K A
autism spectrum disorders
 N E T W O R K

The Southeast ASD Scoop

February 2011
 Volume 2, Issue 5

Time For Some Spring Cleaning!

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As the weather starts warming up (hopefully!), many individuals get an urge to purge unnecessary items from our house or lives. We often spend a weekend “spring cleaning” our house or apartment after the long winter season.

As we enter the last few months of the school year, some teachers may feel like they are in a rut or are starting to feel the demands of the school year. With spring just around the corner, it’s a great time to do a quick self-evaluation and reflect on our teaching skills. It’s time to gather that dust pan, broom and trash can and do some “spring cleaning” on ourselves.

Stephen Shore, EdD., the co-author of *Understanding Autism for Dummies* created a list of characteristics to look for in a teacher that works with students on the autism spectrum. After reading through the list, I think

that this list of characteristics applies to all teachers of students with special needs.

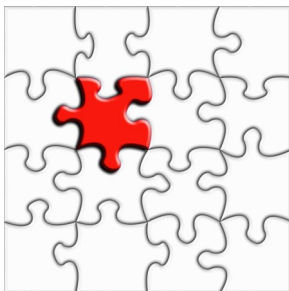
Take a moment and evaluate how you are teaching. Are you exhibiting these characteristics on a daily basis when working with your student on the autism spectrum?

- **Positive Attitude:** Are you happy with your job and the students you are working with? Your attitude in the classroom is one factor that can greatly change the dynamics of your classroom and how students respond to you.
- **Creativity:** Do you make the classroom or environment a fun place to be? Is the classroom stimulating in a way that is beneficial to your students?

- **Enthusiasm:** Are you excited to work with your students?
- **Fairness:** Do you address the needs of your students on an individual basis? Remember, being fair doesn’t mean that every student gets the same thing. Being fair is giving the student what they need to succeed.
- **Fallacy:** If you make mistakes, do you own up to your errors and apologize to your students? This can make or break a relationship with a student. If you don’t own up to your mistakes, do you think that your student will be able to trust you in the future?
- **Flexibility:** Do you adapt your plans to address the needs and events that are happening at that specific time?

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Nebraska State ASD Conference Welcomes...



On Friday, April 8th we will end the conference with a Keynote address by Sean Smith Ph.D.

Dr. Smith is an associate professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Kansas. He is also an associate researcher with the Center for Research on Learning and the eLearning Design Lab at KU.

He is a researcher, developer and teacher educator who is passionate about helping struggling students and those with special needs experience success.

Dr. Smith will also be presenting a breakout session the afternoon of the 8th before his Keynote address.

If you attend one of his sessions, you will leave with many technology-based solutions applicable to the needs of ALL students, but critical to the success of those with learning challenges!

Time For Some Spring Cleaning!



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- **Has High Expectations:** Do you believe that your students, taking into consideration their developmental level, can achieve the goals that the IEP team has set? Does your team work on those goals daily with the expectation they will be met by the review date?
- **Humorous:** If mistakes happen or when something unexpected happens, do you see the humor in the situation or do you become upset and angry? Many students on the autism spectrum respond well to humor.
- **Prepared:** Do you understand the material that you are using with your students?
- **Provides emotional safety and compassion:** Is the classroom a safe place to be? Is your student comfortable coming to you if they are upset or have a problem?
- **Respectful:** Are you sensitive to your student's feelings and needs? Can you understand from their perspective, the demands that are placed on them daily? Do you use person-first language (talking about the student first, instead of the disability first—e.g. student with autism instead of autistic student)?

Take a moment to evaluate if you are exhibiting these characteristics. If you feel comfortable, ask another teacher that you work with how if they see most of these characteristics. If there is a characteristic that is lacking, take a moment to think about how you can improve that skill and incorporate it into your daily teaching

routine.

Stephen Shore, EdD., also lists three warning flags when observing teachers that work with students on the autism spectrum.

- **Negativity:** Do you focus on the lack of skills or behaviors instead of focusing on the student's successes?
- **Lack of humility:** Do you realize that no one has all of the answers when it comes to ASD's? Are you willing to admit if you make a mistake?
- **Yelling:** Do you yell at your student to stop a behavior that is not life-threatening? Everyone is bound to have an "off" day, but do you raise your voice consistently to address behavior issues?

As spring approaches, take this opportunity to purge any unwanted teaching "characteristics" and replace them with characteristics that will benefit all of your students, not only those on the autism spectrum.

Information taken from *Understanding Autism for Dummies*, by Stephen M. Shore, EdD., and Linda G. Rastelli, MA. Published in 2006 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Sensory Suggestions, Part 4

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. The past three issues have highlighted the vestibular, proprioceptive and tactile systems. Activities to address those systems were included. This month we are highlighting the auditory system. Please consult with your Occupational Therapist before implementing any sensory activities with your student.

Sensory System: Auditory

Location of this system: Inner ear, which is

stimulated by air and sound waves

Function: The auditory system provides information about sounds in the environment (loud, soft, high, low, distance)

Activities to address students that need a quiet environment to stay organized:

- Ear plugs—make sure to purchase a variety of styles to try with your student
- Headphones to block the amount of sound coming in—try several for the most comfortable fit

Activities to address students that need a steady input auditory stimulation to stay organized:

- Tabletop water fountain or sound machine (waves, ocean, forest)
- Listen to music through headphones or and IPOD

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.

Need a Quick Vocabulary Lesson?

In the world of special education, we tend to use many acronyms and abbreviations when talking with parents. Many times we also see acronyms while reading about autism spectrum disorders. Here's a quick cheat sheet on the more popular acronyms you may run across when reading or talking about an autism spectrum disorder.

ABA = Applied Behavioral Analysis

ABC = Antecedent, Consequence and Behavior

ADOS = Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule

AS = Asperger Syndrome

ASD = Autism Spectrum Disorder

Aspies = A term that individuals with Asperger Syndrome use that refer to their diagnosis

CF Diet = Casein Free (milk)

DIR = Developmental Individual Difference Relation-Based Intervention

DSM = Diagnostic and Statistical Manual

DTT = Discrete Trial Training

FBA = Functional Behavioral Assessment

GADS = Gilliam Asperger Diagnostic Scale

GARS = Gilliam Autism Rating

Scale

GF Diet = Gluten Free (wheat)

HFA = High Functioning Autism

PDD = Pervasive Developmental Disability

PDD—NOS = Pervasive Developmental Disability Not Otherwise Specified

PECS = Picture Exchange Communication System

TEACCH = Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children

TOM = Theory of Mind

VB = Verbal Behavior



Resources

Do you currently work with a girl that is higher-functioning and on the autism spectrum?

If so, research is showing that girls on the spectrum present differently than boys on the spectrum. Instead of displaying outbursts or big meltdowns, some girls on the spectrum are dealing with anxiety issues that cause them to withdraw from situations. Girls on the spectrum may also be able to “cover up” their lack of social awareness better than boys on the spectrum.

To learn more about girls on the autism spectrum, check out the following resources:

Girls Under the Umbrella of Autism Spectrum Disorders by Lori Ernsperger, Ph.D., and Danielle Wendel, published by Autism Asperger Publishing Company

Girls and Asperger's by Tony Attwood and Temple Grandin, et. al, published by Future Horizons

Answers to January's Letter Tile Game

The special message in the mixed up letter tiles was:

Join us at the Nebraska ASD
Annual Conference!

Website Resources

Here are some websites that are great resources when working with individuals on the spectrum!

⇒ Autism Speaks Transition Kit -

http://www.autismspeaks.org/community/family_services/index.php

Check out this page for the new Transition Kit from Autism Speaks. The Transition kit is in pdf format and is available to download for free!

⇒ Nebraska Transition Library -

<http://www.nebraskatransitionlibrary.net/>

Go to this website to look for more resources to check out and preview before you buy them for your school and/or classroom! Resources are listed by subject and levels. (Elementary to High School)



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Check Us Out on the Web !

<http://unl.edu/asdnetwork>

http://www.esu6.org/services/asd_home.htm

<http://seasdnetwork.wordpress.com>

Upcoming Trainings

Social Skills for the Inclusive Classroom (Early Childhood)

Date: March 4th, 2011

Place: ESU #3, Omaha

Presenter: **Teri McGill, Metro Region Coordinator**

DEADLINE TO REGISTER: FEBRUARY 25th

For more information visit the Nebraska ASD Network website, ESU 6 Autism website
or the Southeast ASD Network blog.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE *EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION FEE* FOR THE
NEBRASKA STATE ASD CONFERENCE IS *FEBRUARY 28, 2011.*

PLEASE JOIN US APRIL 7TH AND 8TH, 2011 AT THE EMBASSY SUITES, PAPPILLION, NE

