



The Southeast ASD Scoop

March 2011
Volume 2, Issue 6

The Six Needs of Students on the Autism Spectrum

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At the end of January, I had the opportunity to hear Brian R. King, LCSW present in Omaha.

Brian was a last minute replacement for James Emmett, who was slated to talk about transition needs and strategies. Brian's presentation didn't focus on transition strategies specifically, but focused more on how to help students with autism spectrum disorders succeed in the real world. What I didn't know before attending was that Brian himself is on the spectrum, is married to a woman on the spectrum and has two sons that are on the spectrum. Needless to say, Brian was able to give us amazing insights into autism spectrum disorders and how it affects individuals.

One of the topics that Brian covered during his presentation was six primary needs of students on the autism spectrum. These needs

were discussed in order of importance.

The first need was for the students to be **calm and focused**. To have a student with autism spectrum disorders calm and focused, we need to make sure that their nervous system is balanced, along with their mood and thinking. We can do the majority of this "balancing" by incorporating sensory activities and breaks into the student's day. Until the student is calm and focused, we aren't going to be able to make much progress if we are trying to teach specific skills.

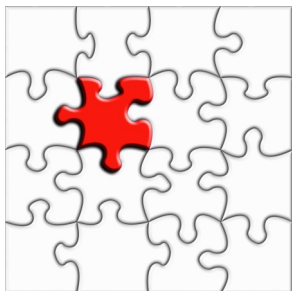
The second need was **certainty**. Certainty encompasses predictability, reliability, trust and loyalty. It's having people and activities in their environment that the student can predict and rely upon. This is why we put such a huge focus on schedules and consistency. This does not mean that we

should do the same activity over and over. Brian said that most individuals on the spectrum like variety, not change that they are not aware of. An example of this need for variety, but not change, is the use of video games. Often times, individuals on the spectrum like to play video games, and according to Brian, it's because it is a routine activity, but it incorporates a variety of solutions, levels, activities that can be done within the structure of the game.

The third need was to feel **competent and confident**. Too often, students with autism spectrum disorders experience failure, not success on a regular basis. The need to feel competent is typically why students often talk or participate in their special interest. This allows them to demonstrate the need of competence, which then directly increases their feelings of confidence in their abilities.

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See you at the NE ASD State Conference!



As I am writing this newsletter, the registration for the NE ASD State conference is closed. We are no longer accepting registrations since we are at capacity.

If you are attending the State Conference, here are some tips to make sure that you'll have a great conference experience:

- Wear layers of clothing since it is hard to adjust the temperature in large conference centers.
- Pick one or two topics that you want to learn more about and target those breakout sessions.
- Review the conference schedule at-a-glance to plan out your breakout sessions ahead of time. (<http://ennect.com/e1378/p11071.aspx>)
- Network! There will be plenty of opportunities to network with other parents and educators throughout the state.

The Six Needs of Students on the Autism Spectrum

Continued from page 1

When we talk about confidence, we also have to make sure that we provide proof of their competence. Teachers can easily provide proof of competence by showing the students visually or just by telling the students that they know what they are talking about!

The fourth need of a student on the autism spectrum is **connection**. Connection is the sharing of experiences together. Typical students also have the need of connection, but for our students, this may look differently. Sitting down with them to play a game of their interest or engage in play with them can fulfill the need of connection. With all of the requirements and pressure that teachers are faced with now, often times we have to make a conscious choice to build in time for connection with our students. This need for connection is not only with adults, but with their peers. It's important that we incorporate activities that can be done with their typically developing peers.

The fifth need is **progress**. Students with autism spectrum disorders need to have the sense that they are making progress. Typically, a student on the spectrum can not tell when they are making progress on a specific skill. This requires specific feedback from adults or other students. We can easily track the progress of specific skills on charts or graphs, so that our students can see their

progress visually. Not only is data collection is extremely important to show the progress of IEP goals and objectives, it is also important to be able to show the amount of progress to our students.

The sixth, and final need for a student on the autism spectrum is **contribution**. Contribution is the feeling that what you are and have is valued by others. If we look back at the previous needs, such as competence, confidence and progress, without these needs fulfilled, our students would not be able to get to the level where they feel that they contribute something to their school and society. Often times, our students on the autism spectrum know about all of the problems that they have caused for everyone else but not about their contributions. We need to look at our student's strengths and use those strengths to solve problems for other people. Some schools incorporate the need of contribution by having the students with an autism spectrum disorder run a school business, such as a coffee shop or be a student manager of a sports team. There are many ways that schools can help our students feel like they are contributing to their school and society.

During Brian's presentation, he compared the six needs of a student on the spectrum to the six needs of a typical child. A typical child needs (in order of importance):

1. Certainty
2. Variety
3. Significance
4. Love and connection
5. Growth
6. Contribution

When we compare the six needs of a typical student to the needs of a student with an autism spectrum disorder, we see a few similarities. If we look at the similarities, the lists differ in the importance of each need. We need to remember when working with our students that the most important need for a student with an autism spectrum disorder is different than the most important need for a typical student.

When we are looking at a student's programming or overall schedule, look to see if you are meeting these needs. Programming for students on the autism spectrum should be comprehensive so that we can meet all six of these needs during the student's school day.

For more information on Brian R. King, LCSW, please visit his website and blog. The address is

<http://spectrummentor.com>.

Sensory Suggestions, Part 5

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

Sensory System: Visual

Location of this system: Retina of the eye

(stimulated by light)

Function: Provides information about objects and persons, helps to define boundaries as we move

Activities to address visual challenges:

- Taking breaks in a quiet or visually neutral environment
- Looking at a filtered fish tank
- Watching a soothing screen saver
- Watching water/oil toys

- Engage in soothing online or handheld games with repeating color patterns

For schools with fluorescent lighting try:

- Printing worksheets on pastel paper
- Using natural or incandescent light bulbs
- Using laptop versus a desktop computer
- Using pastel colored transparencies

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.

S.T.E.P.S Applications are Now Available!

The Nebraska ASD Network is currently accepting applications for the S.T.E.P.S training program. S.T.E.P.S stands for Strategies and Techniques for Effective Practices: Educating Children with Autism. The STEPS program was initially developed to provide training and support to educators working with students on the autism spectrum.

S.T.E.P.S is an eight day, year long training process where participants will learn about assessment, selecting interventions and implementation of those interventions for their students on the spectrum.

Each participant will be assigned a mentor, whom is required to at-

tend all training sessions along with their mentee. Throughout the eight days of training, the participants, along with the help of their mentors, will create action plans relating to strategies and/or techniques they have learned. A target student is selected at the beginning of the training process and documentation is collected on the effectiveness of the strategies.

In the past, S.T.E.P.S has encompassed all ages and ability levels of students on the autism spectrum. During the 2010-2011 school year, S.T.E.P.S focused on students with autism in early childhood.

For the 2011-2012 school year, S.T.E.P.S will be focusing on stu-

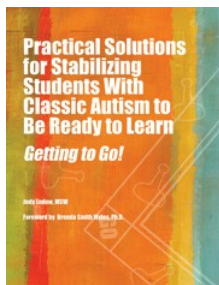
dents with high-functioning autism or Asperger Syndrome in middle or high school.

Each region is only able to accept *three* participants. Trainings are in 4 sessions— two days, back to back days, starting in August and ending in May. The deadline for applications is **May 6th, 2011**.

For the application and dates, please go to http://www.esu6.org/services/asd_html or <http://seasdnetwork.wordpress.org>.

Applications should be mailed to Melissa Trautman, ESU 6, 210 5th St. Milford, NE 68405 by May 6th, 2011. Acceptance letters will be emailed in May to the 2011-2012 participants and mentors.

Resources Available for Checkout from the ASD Library



Practical Solutions for Stabilizing Students with Classic Autism to Be Ready to Learn: Getting to Go!

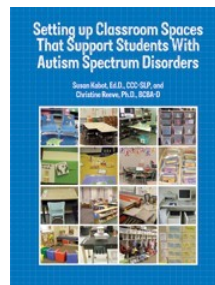
By Judy Endow, MSW

Foreword by Brenda Smith Myles, Ph.D.

This book focuses on stabilizing a student with classic autism by using two strategies: sensory and visual supports. Examples of how the author, who is on the spectrum, deals with sensory issues and pictures of visual supports is included in this book.

Published in 2011 by the Autism Asperger Publishing Company

(<http://www.aapcpublishing.net>)



Setting up Classroom Spaces That Support Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders

By Susan Kabot, Ed.D., CCC-SLP and Christine Reeve, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Foreword by L. Juane Heftin, Ph.D.

This is a must have book in your school and professional library. The authors walk educators through the process of setting up a classroom space and learning environment for their students on the autism spectrum. Color photographs of spaces, supply lists and a list of resources round out this great resource!

Published in 2010 by the Autism Asperger Publishing Company

(<http://www.aapcpublishing.net>)

Website Resources

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

⇒ Autism Classroom.com -

http://autismclassroom.com/home/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=45&Itemid=89

A great website FULL of printable visual supports!

⇒ Room 5 Ideas -

<http://room5ideas.com/home.html>

Go to this website for ideas on strategies when working with students on the autism spectrum, links to other websites, and lots of color photographs of workbox examples!



Educational Service Unit #6

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Contact Information

Melissa Trautman

210 5th Street

Milford, NE

68405

Phone: 402-761-3341

Fax: 402-761-3279

E-mail:

mtrautman@esu6.org

Check Us Out on the Web !

<http://unl.edu/asdnetwork>

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

<http://seasdnetwork.wordpress.com>

Upcoming Trainings

The Ziggurat Model: Designing comprehensive behavior interventions for individuals of all ages with autism spectrum disorders

May 2nd and 3rd, 2011 ESU #3, Omaha, NE

8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

For more information, please go to <http://www.unl.edu/asdnetwork>

SPACE IS LIMITED! Registrations are due April 22, 2011

I'm excited to see everyone at the

NEBRASKA STATE ASD CONFERENCE !

APRIL 7TH AND 8TH, 2011 AT THE EMBASSY SUITES, PAVILLION, NE

