

IF I'M SO SMART, WHY IS SCHOOL SO HARD?

Supporting Students with Asperger Syndrome in Elementary General Education Classrooms

Supporting Social Needs

Improve status of student
Be explicit
Protect against bullying
Create a safe classroom

The population of AS students is the most vulnerable on a school campus

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Improve Status of the Child

- Treat the child with respect
- Indicate interest and approval of the child
- Highlight child's strengths
- Set the child up for successful social interactions
- Provide increased supervision to protect against teasing and bullying

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Provide Social Skill Support



Believe that any/every moment could be used as the context for social skill training. The more broad-based and frequent the cues and feedback are given, the more likely the student will integrate new skills.

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Provide Social Skill Support

- Provide social information that is explicit and “rule based.” The more universal and functional, the better.
- Create cues to help the child remember the rule.
- Capitalize on teachable moments and imbed social skills into all lessons.
- Develop formal or informal buddy systems.
- If you use cooperative learning groups, teach all students HOW to be group members, HOW to make comments, HOW to question, HOW to encourage...

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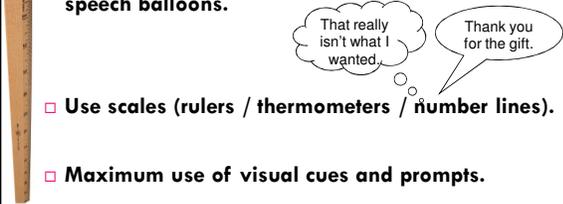
Provide Social Skill Support

- Educate peers on all disabilities, including AS.
- Consider having the student and/or parents or another person present on AS.
- Work closely with the student’s support team so that you are reinforcing the same skills.
- Teach the “hidden curriculum”
- When you give social information, be explicit and make it concrete and visual.

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Make Social / Behavioral Information Visual and Concrete

- Draw pictures – special use of thought and speech balloons.
- Use scales (rulers / thermometers / number lines).
- Maximum use of visual cues and prompts.



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Be Explicit – Luke Jackson

“The key to helping a child with Asperger Syndrome is to always make sure you tell them very clearly what is going on. I really cannot stress this enough. If you explain to them clearly in terms that you may even consider below their intelligence, it really does help. I can breathe such a sigh of relief when I know exactly what is going on and why.”

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Bullying and AS



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21 Characteristics of a Target of Bullying



- Have ineffective social skills
- Have poor interpersonal skills
- Believe that they cannot control their environment
- Have underlying fears of personal inadequacy
- Socially isolated
- Afraid of going to school
- Poor self-concept
- Have difficulty relating to peers
- Less popular
- Blame themselves for their problems

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21 Characteristics of a Target of Bullying

- Given labels suggesting inadequacy
- Limited skills for gaining acceptance and success
- Limited communication skills under stress
- Have physical mannerisms associated with depression
- Have frequent feelings of personal inadequacy
- Perform self-destructive acts
- Believe others are more capable of handling things
- Have family members over-involved in their decisions and activities
- Perceived progressive failures

Notice how many of these general characteristics of victims of bullying are also characteristics of AS

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Decrease the Risk of Bullying

- Increase supervision
 - During unstructured times
 - In areas where there is low supervision (in restrooms, etc)
- Find ways to pair the student with considerate peers during unstructured times.
 - Playground buddies
 - High interest "clubs" or activities
- Teach students how to respond to teasing or bullying

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Creating Safe Classrooms

- Monitor the messages you send
 - Greet students by name
 - Make eye contact with every student
 - Ensure that all students can show their strengths
 - Show interest in every student
 - Be a good listener
 - Individualize instruction
 - Write personal, positive notes to students

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Creating Safe Classrooms

- Create a class code
- Name bullying behaviors
- Designate your classroom bully free
- Teach anger management skills
- Teach friendship skills
- Use a "Notes-to-the-teacher" box
- Get students involved in service to others



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Creating Safe Classrooms

- Use quotations as teaching tools
- Encourage random acts of kindness
 - Class discussion
 - Kindness box
 - Kindness pals
 - Kindness reporters
 - Big book of kindness
- Teach assertiveness skills
- Teach problem solving skills



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Creating Safe Classrooms

- Try not to have "teacher's pets"
- Remember that equal doesn't mean the same
- Demonstrate good will and trust toward the student who is most at risk.
- Make a conscious, deliberate, focused effort to check your prejudices, unlearn them and get beyond them.
- SMILE!
- Think positive thoughts about all of your students. Have high hopes for them.

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Creating Safe Classrooms

When a teacher responds impatiently or with sarcasm, rolls his eyes, makes fun of the student's behavior or excludes the student from class activities, he is teaching the other students how to treat that student.

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