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

Supporting Students with Asperger Syndrome in Elementary General Education Classrooms

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**Academic Supports**

- Supporting comprehension
- Supports for written language
- Executive functioning
- General classroom support

**If the mainstream classroom is a pressure cooker, take it off the flame!**

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**Supporting Comprehension**

- Abstract language
- Inference
- Reading comprehension

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### Monitor Your Use of Language

- Pause between sentences
- Only one instruction at a time
- Avoid sarcasm
- Metaphors and figures of speech are explained
- Avoid ambiguous instructions
- Only say "will you..." or "Can you..." if there is a choice

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### Literal Thinking

- Students are very "concrete thinkers." They do best when content is explicit and requires little interpretation.
- Figurative language is a mystery-teach figurative expressions, highlight them in text and in conversations. Prepare "idiom dictionaries."
- Use cartooning to clarify figurative expressions.

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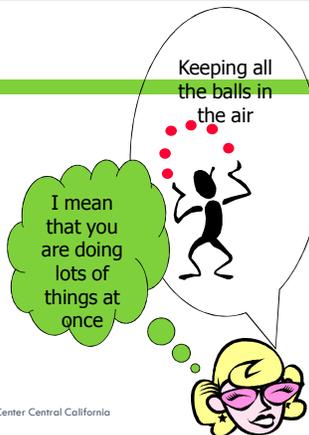
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### Cartooning

Cartooning can be used to:

- Explain idioms
- Help students understand that thoughts and feelings are different
- Help to interpret social situations



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**If you are having trouble with a particular idiom or metaphor, one that makes you eat humble pie, don't sweat it. Cool your jets and get a grip on yourself. If you play your cards right, you might find out that this program is right up your alley. So, stop running around like a chicken with it's head cut off and quit spinning your wheels. If you need to, just catch some z's. If you don't get up on the wrong side of the bed, you might be able to wing it, find a meaning that fits the bill, and have a blast while you are at it. But hold the phone! I think that I'm getting carried away here and am about to lose my marbles...**

**(by Jeanette McAfee)**

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**Inferential Thinking**

- **Inferencing requires one to use both verbal and non-verbal information about a situation and make a guess.**
- **AS students learn "pools of information" but don't see how they are related.**

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**Supporting Inferencing**

- **Explicitly practice making inferences in small group work. Start with the very concrete. Teach the language of predicting. "I guess.." "I imagine that.." "I wonder if.."**
- **In literature and history, when the inference is essential for comprehension, state it explicitly. Ex: "The settlers at Jamestown died because they did not have enough food or shelter."**

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### Supporting Inferencing

- **Work from what student can do well-list concrete information. Then through Venn diagrams, plot lines and concept maps lead to abstractions like:**
  - How were the civil war and the revolutionary war alike and different?
  - What events led to the development of written language?
  - What issues led to the Civil War?

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### Supporting Inferencing

- **Use Winner's "facilitating frameworks"**
  - A way to build an extra level of structure and support to assist students in seeing relationships and making inferences.
  - Can be used for thinking about content (literature, history) or in preparation for a writing assignment.
  - Can be prepared by teacher, aide, or parent

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Inside Out by Michelle Garcia Winner

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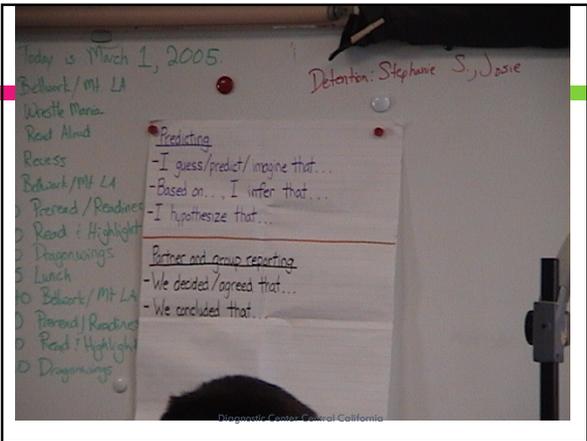
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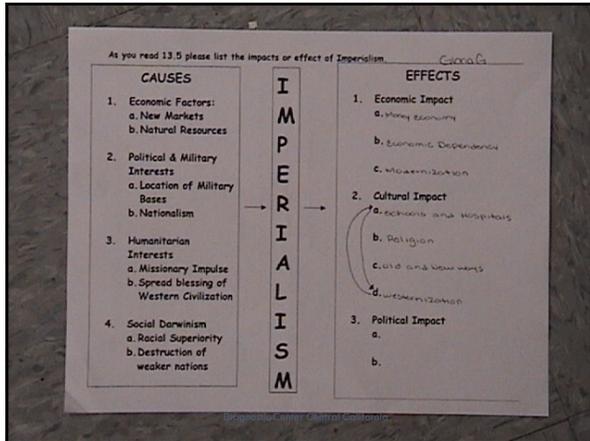
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### Big Idea

- We need to support student's understanding of narrative text in the same way we support them in understanding social thinking.
  - Thorough investigation of the perspective of the primary characters
  - Making motivation and intention explicit (comic strips)

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### Reading Comprehension

- Work on:
  - Identifying characters personality, mood, thoughts.
  - Identifying how the main character relates to other characters.
  - Understanding/identifying each problem.
  - Identifying the choices the character made to solve the problem.
  - Lead to considering alternate outcomes.

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## Collaborative Strategic Reading

□ **A package of comprehension strategies:**

**Before Reading**

**1. Preview**

- **Brainstorm:** What do we already know about the topic?
- **Predict:** What do we think we will learn about the topic when we read the passage?

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## During Reading



**2. Click and Clunk**

- Were there any parts that were hard to understand (clunks)?
- How can we fix the clunks? Use fix-up strategies. Ex:
  - Reread the sentence and look for key ideas to help you understand the word.
  - Reread the sentence with the clunk and the sentences before or after the clunk looking for clues
  - Look for a prefix or suffix in the word
  - Break the word apart and look for smaller words

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**3. Get the Gist**

- What is the most important person, place, or thing?
- What is the most important idea about the person, place or thing?

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## After Reading

### 4. Wrap Up

- **Ask Questions:** What questions would show we understand the most important information? What are the answers to those questions?
- **Review:** What did we learn?

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## Use Graphic and Semantic Organizers

- **Graphic organizers can:**
  - Help students focus on text structure as they read
  - Provide students with tools they can use to examine and visually represent relationships in a text
  - Help students write well-organized summaries of a text

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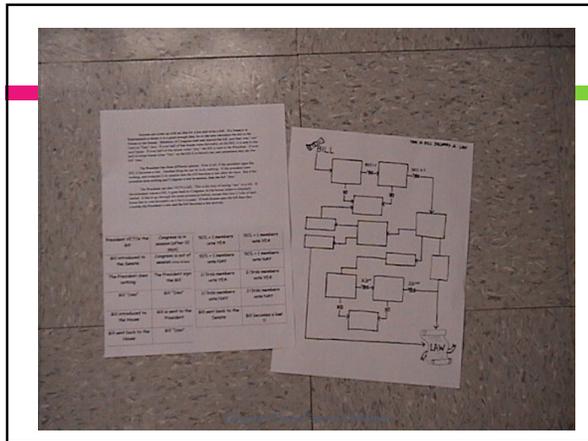
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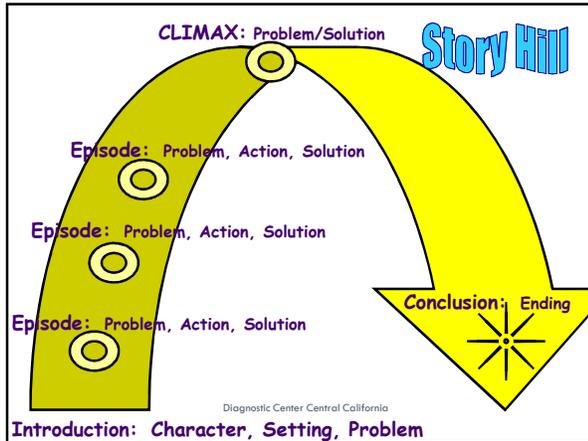
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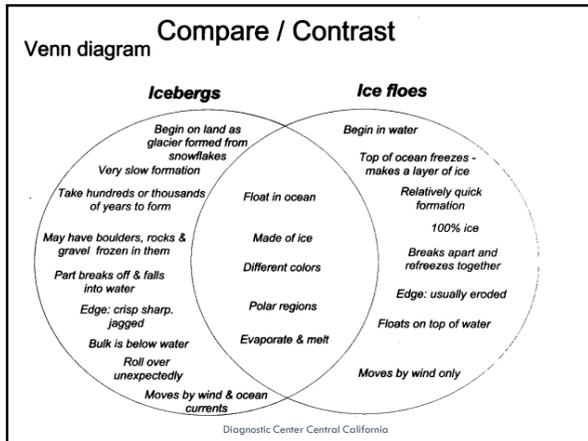
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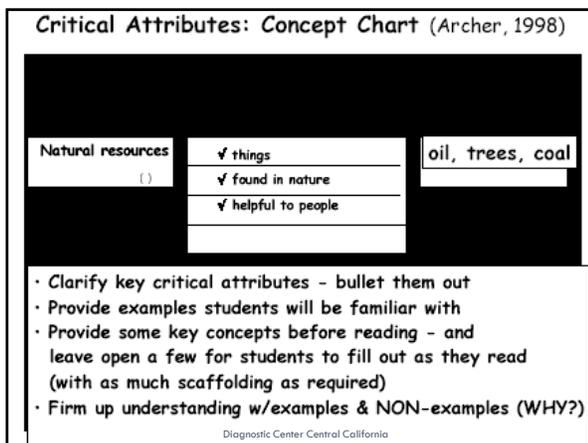
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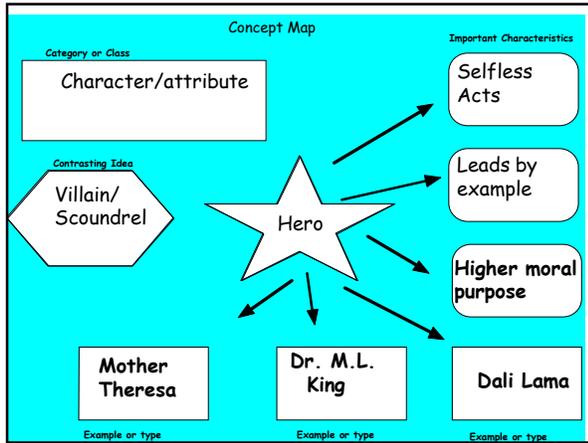
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### Concept Map/Framing Routine (Ellis, 1997)

**Term: SATIRE**

**Core Idea:** Any work that uses wit to attack foolishness

Example:	Clarifiers	Knowledge Connections
* a story that exposes the acts of corrupt politicians by making fun of them - Bill C.	* can be oral or written * reveals/exposes vice in a clever way	* Political cartoon on the editorial page of our paper
<b>NON-example:</b> * a story that exposes the acts of corrupt politicians through factual reporting - Watergate	* can include irony, exaggeration, name calling, understatement * usually based on a real person or event	* the stories TV comics tell to make fun of the President - like on Saturday Night Live * My Mom's humor at dinner time!!

**Example sentence:**  
Charles Dickens used satire to expose the problems of Common Folks in working-class England.

- \* List the core idea - a summary statement or brief definition
- \* List the clarifiers or critical attributes that explicate the concept
- \* Brainstorm knowledge connections personal links from students word views
- \* Examples - list 1 or 2
- \* Non-examples - list 1 or 2
- \* Check w/more examples, "is \_\_\_ and example of \_\_\_, why?"
- \* Construct a sentence that "shows you know"

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**Supports for Written Language**

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### Handwriting Supports

- Experiment with pencil grips
- Experiment with atypical pencil grasp
- Limit need for some handwriting
  - Provide text that others copy from board, book.
- Provide different means-keyboards, computer
- Encourage printing or cursive depending on what is easier.

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### Writing Supports

- Increase the explicitness of the assignment
  - # of sentences
  - "frame" for paragraph/story
- Increase the pre-writing steps (brainstorming, word banks, etc.) with support
- Prepare "facilitating framework"

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### Note Taking supports

- First must explicitly teach how to determine the main idea
- Any note taking strategy may be effective if explicitly taught
- Remember this hierarchy:
  - notes from reading material
  - notes from the board
  - notes from lecture

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**Note Taking Supports**

- Student reads entire assignment, but only takes notes on a portion of it and is provided with notes on the rest.
- Big ideas:
  - better to do part of an assignment well than all of it poorly
  - Reduce anxiety so the student can function

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**Note Taking Supports**

**Notes on text before lecture**

- Student reads text prior to lecture.
- Paper folded in half and notes taken on reading (book notes).
  - Use colored pencils for headings, new vocabulary.
- During the class lecture/discussion of the chapter, the student adds any information that has not already been included.

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**Note Taking Supports**

**Fill in the blank Notes**

- The student receives an outline on which he fills in missing bits of information.
- This is appropriate for reading and lecture.
- This increases focus and helps identify what is important.

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