Toolkit on fighting discrimination of children with autism spectrum disorder within the school

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Introduction from the Authors

Our first experience in teaching students with autism was in the year 1978, when we were teachers in a small special school at a Child psychiatric hospital in Reykjavík, Iceland. Some of the students were staying in a day center at the hospital while others stayed there for a longer period of time. Among the students in this school, a few of them had autism, and they only came to school for about one hour a day. At that time, school was not seen as a proper place for students with autism. But things changed rapidly in the coming years, and in 1989, it was decided to establish a special class for students with autism in a mainstream school in Kópavogur, Iceland. Three Icelandic specialists; a special aids teacher, a speech therapist and a nurse, specialized in mental health, went to North Carolina in the USA to learn about the TEACCH approach, which had started in 1966 as part of the Department of Psychiatry of the School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina in the USA.

The TEACCH-program began as a Child Research Project to provide services to children with autism and their families. In 1972 the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation which enabled Division TEACCH to become the first comprehensive statewide community-based program of services for children and adults with autism and other similar developmental disorders.

This first special class for students with autism in a mainstream school became a model for more special classes and now, there are more than ten special classes for students with autism in the mainstream elementary schools in Iceland. Most of the special classes use the TEACCH approach but at least one of them uses ABA as well and some of them a mixture of these two approaches as well as other implications.

In this Toolkit, we choose to introduce the TEACCH approach. In our experience that the TEACCH model is highly effective when it comes to organizing education for students with autism in mainstream schools as well as in special classes or in special schools.

TEACCH have developed the intervention approach called Structured Teaching Model (STM), which is based on understanding the learning characteristics of people with autism and the use of visual supports to promote meaning and independence. TEACCH services are supported by empirical research, enriched by extensive clinical expertise, and notable for its flexible and individualized support of people with autism and their families.

As well we will introduce a few methods for social skills trainings, as well as how we can adapt the curriculum to each individual. Last but not least we will discuss how we can set up a classroom, a special class or a special school.

The methods that we introduce, are the ones that we know from our personal experience as teachers and autism counselors for several decades. We have seen the power of visual strategies for students with autism spectrum disorders. We have met and worked with many creative educators and families who also used visual strategies to support their children and students. We are fully aware of that there are more interventions methods in teaching students with autism and we are in no way comparing intervention methods but trying to share our best practices.

Much of the information in this Toolkit comes from resources that we find being useful and practical. List of sources is at the end of each document.

In October, 2015, we held three courses in Romania, as a part of the MASPA project. Each course lasted for three days and there were 50 professionals participating in each, one in Arad, the second one was held in Galati and the third in Bucharest. The Toolkit will hopefully go deeper into the subjects that we discussed there and hopefully it can encourage our colleagues in Romania in their future work in the field of autism.

In December, 2015

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Chapter 1. What Is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD is a term used to describe people who have a common set of characteristics related to their ability to communicate

ASD is characterized by:
- Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts.
- Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities.
- Symptoms must be present in the early developmental period (typically recognized in the first two years of life).
- Symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning.

The term "spectrum" refers to the wide range of symptoms, skills, and levels of impairment or disability that children with ASD can have. Some children are mildly impaired by their symptoms, while others are severely disabled. The latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) no longer includes Asperger's syndrome; the characteristics of Asperger's syndrome are included within the broader category of ASD.

Each individual with autism is unique. Many of those on the autism spectrum have exceptional abilities in visual skills, music and academic skills. About 40 percent have average to above average intellectual abilities. Indeed, many persons on the spectrum take deserved pride in their distinctive abilities and "atypical" ways of viewing the world. Others with autism have significant disability and are unable to live independently. About 25 percent of individuals with ASD are nonverbal but can learn to communicate using other means.

How Common is Autism?

ASD affects about tens of millions worldwide. Moreover, government autism statistics suggest that prevalence rates have increased 10 to 17 percent annually in recent years. There is no established explanation for this continuing increase, although improved diagnosis and environmental influences are two reasons often considered[1].

Research in Iceland reflects this development, and the most recent prevalence estimates for all autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is 120.1/10,000 or 1.2%. Inspection of the group behind this high prevalence shows proportionally more children who are high functioning, i.e. well over 50% have IQ $\geq$70.

Causes?

ASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder. Scientists don't know the exact causes of ASD, but research suggests that both genes and environment play important roles. Many studies have indicated specific genetic changes which are linked to autism but many of those changes are also linked to other neurodevelopmental disorders. Environmental risks factors are also usually not only linked to increased risk in autism but also to other developmental problems. There is also a complex interaction between genetics and environment which explains some of the phenotypic variations for each person.

Teaching Interventions

While there's no proven cure yet for ASD, early intervention, using school-based programs, and getting proper medical care can greatly reduce ASD symptoms and increase child's ability to grow and learn new skills.

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[1] http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd/index.shtml

Early intervention

There is no single best treatment for all children with ASD, but the American Academy of Pediatrics recently noted common features of effective early intervention programs. These include:

- Starting as soon as a child has been diagnosed with ASD
- Providing focused and challenging learning activities at the proper developmental level for the child for at least 25 hours per week and 12 months per year
- Having small classes to allow each child to have one-on-one time with the therapist or teacher and small group learning activities
- Having special training for parents and family
- Encouraging activities that include typically developing children, as long as such activities help meet a specific learning goal
- Measuring and recording each child's progress and adjusting the intervention program as needed
- Providing a high degree of structure, routine, and visual cues, such as posted activity schedules and clearly defined boundaries, to reduce distractions
- Guiding the child in adapting learned skills to new situations and settings and maintaining learned skills
- Using a curriculum that focuses on:
  - o Language and communication
  - o Social skills, such as joint attention (looking at other people to draw attention to something interesting and share in experiencing it)
  - o Self-help and daily living skills, such as dressing and grooming
  - o Research-based methods to reduce challenging behaviors, such as aggression and tantrums
  - o Cognitive skills, such as pretend play or seeing someone else's point of view
  - o Typical school-readiness skills, such as letter recognition and counting.

Other research also report that the most effective intervention programmes have the following characteristics:

- A focus on specific skills that are to be learned.
- The structure of the environment enables the opportunity for skills and knowledge to be transferred (generalization).
- The components of the programme give predictability and routine.
- The intervention involves the whole family.

The most successful programs use a team approach that ensures each student is considered as an individual. One student with autism can have very different strengths, needs and challenges from another. School staff should also be encouraged to seek out people who know the student well – experienced teachers, therapists and families – and try to always seek first to understand. With the support of the entire school community students with autism can make great strides and become valued members of the student body.

Table 1 What does autism look like and how might it affect learning and behavior in the classroom?	
Behavioral characteristics of autism	**Possible impacts upon learning and behavior**
Difficulties in social interaction shown by:	
• the limited use of non-verbal behaviors such as eye gaze and body posture to regulate social interaction • problems developing peer relationships • limited spontaneous showing and sharing of interests • limited social emotional reciprocity	• difficulties in forming reciprocal peer relationships and friendships • difficulties in picking up on non-verbal or emotional cues • taking what is said to them literally • difficulties in picking up on social cues, particularly in group activities • unpredictable emotional responses (e.g., anxiety, outbursts) for no apparent reason
Difficulties in communication shown by:	
• delayed language development without nonverbal compensation • problems starting/sustaining conversations • repetitive and stereotyped language • limited imaginative and imitative play	• problems understanding spoken language/ verbal instructions • not responding when spoken to • poor comprehension of written text even if reading decoding is good • solo or parallel play in place of group play
Restricted repertoire of interests, behaviors and activities shown by:	
• over-focus on particular topics • rigid adherence to routines/rituals • repetitive, stereotyped motor mannerisms • preoccupation with object parts rather than whole	• preference for only one or a few activities • difficulty with transitions, changes in routine and unexpected events • difficulties maintaining attention without external structure/support • difficulties moving from one activity to another • less likely to pick up on the 'gist' of a situation or activity
Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment	
• aversive responses to particular environmental stimuli (e.g., lights, colours, sounds, patterns, smells, touch) • sensory seeking behaviour	• shuts eyes or blocks ears • removes self from the source by leaving a room or people • needs one person/thing at a time • fascination with (looking, smelling, licking) objects or people

Sources:

http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/school_community_tool_kit.pdf

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Dawson G, and Osterling J. (1997) Early intervention in Autism, in M. Guralnik (ed), The Effectiveness of Early Intervention. Baltimore, MD: Brookers

AET Report: What is Good Practice in Autism Education? (2011) (http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/Global/News/Good%20Practice%20Report%20now%20available.aspx)

Chapter 2. The TEACCH Method

The TEACCH method was developed by professor Eric Schopler and many of his colleagues at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA. The TEACCH method is not considered an actual therapy but rather a therapeutic tool to help autistic individuals understand their surroundings. TEACCH approach is a family-centered service, tailored to the needs of people with ASD and their families across their lifespan. TEACCH emphasizes adapting the child's physical environment and using visual cues, for example, having classroom materials clearly marked and located so that students can access them independently.

Using individualized plans for each student, TEACCH approach focuses on the child's strengths and emerging skills. It tap into typical features of ASD to provide security and familiarity in work and other routines, gives predictability, structure and can be tailored to the learning needs of the individual.

TEACCH services are supported by empirical research, enriched by extensive clinical expertise, and notable for its flexible and individualized support of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families.

"Culture of Autism"

TEACCH Autism Program developed the concept of the "Culture of Autism" as a way of thinking about the characteristic patterns of thinking and behavior seen in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Culture refers to shared patterns of human behaviour. Cultural norms affect the ways people think, eat, dress, work, understand natural phenomena such as weather of the passage from day to night, spend leisure time, communicate, and other fundamental aspects of human interactions. Cultures vary widely in these respects, so that people in one group might at times find those from another culture to be incomprehensible or very unusual.

Culture in the strict anthropological sense is passed on from one generation to the next; people think, feel, and behave in certain ways because of what others in their culture have taught them.

Autism is of course not truly a culture; it is a developmental disability caused by neurological dysfunction. Autism too, however, affects the ways that individuals eat, dress, work spend leisure time, understand their world, communicate, etc. Thus, in a sense, autism functions as a culture, in that it yealds characteristic and predictable patterns of behaviour in individuals with this condition. The role of the teacher of a student with ASD is like that of a cross-cultural interpreter: someone who understands both cultures and is able to translate the expectations and procedures of the non-autistic environment to the student with autism. So to teach students with autism, we must understand their culture, and the strengths and deficits that are associated with it.

The range of IQs reported in people with ASD is one source of the tremendous variability in the population of persons who share this diagnosis; another source of variation is the scattering of skills within each individual. Most individuals with ASD show a pattern of relative or even significant strength, usually in certain aspects of memory, visual perception, or unique talents (e.g. , drawing, perfect musical pitch.)

Because the organically-based problems that define ASD are not reversible, we do not take "being normal" as the goal of our educational and therapeutic efforts. Rather, the long-term goal of the TEACCH programme is for the student with ASD to fit as well as possible into our society as an adult. We achieve this goal by respecting the differences that the autism creates within each student, and working within his or her culture to teach the skills needed to function within our society. We work to expand the skills and understanding of the students, while we also adapt environments to their special needs and limitations. In effect, what we attempt to do for them is what we ourselves might wish for when we travel in the foreign country: while we might try to learn some of the foreign language and gather information about the customs of the country, such as the monetary system or how to find a taxi, we would also be very glad to see signs in our language, and have guides who could help us through the process of buying a train ticket or ordering a meal. In the same way, educational services for students with autism should have two goals:

1) increase their understanding; and
2) make the environment more comprehensible.

To achieve these goals of helping people with ASD function more adaptively in our culture, it is necessary to design programmes around the fundamental strengths and deficits of autism which affect daily learning and interactions. This approach to autism is related to, but different from, identifying deficits for diagnostic purposes. The diagnostic features of ASD, such as social deficits and communication problems, are useful in distinguishing ASD from other disabilities, but are relatively imprecise for the purpose of conceptualizing how an individual with autism understands the world, acts upon his understanding, and learns.

Following are the fundamental features of ASD that interact to produce the behaviours which comprise the "culture" of this disorder:
- Relative strength in and preference for processing visual information
  (compared to difficulties with auditory processing, particularly of language)
- Frequent attention to details but difficulty understanding the meaning of
  how those details fit together
- Difficulty combining ideas
- Difficulty with organizing ideas, materials, and activities
- Difficulties with attention. (Some individuals are very distractible, others
  have difficulty shifting attention when it is time to make transitions)
- Difficulty with concepts of time, including moving too quickly or too slowly and
  having problems recognizing the beginning, middle, or end of an activity
- Communication problems, which vary by developmental level but
  always include impairments in the social use of language (called "pragmatics")
- Tendency to become attached to routines, with the result that activities
  may be difficult to generalize from the original learning situation and
  disruptions in routines that are upsetting, confusing, or uncomfortable

• Very strong interests and impulses in engaging in favored activities, with difficulties disengaging once engaged
• Marked sensory preferences and dislikes.

Structured Teaching

TEACCH developed the intervention approach called "Structured Teaching", which is based on understanding the learning characteristics of individuals with autism and the use of visual supports to promote meaning and independence. Structured Teaching is both a method for teaching new skills and a way of organizing any setting so that is understandable and meaningful for individual with ASD.

Principles of Structured Teaching:

• Understanding the culture of autism
• Developing an individualized person- and family-centered plan for each client or student, rather than using a standard curriculum
• Structuring the physical environment
• Using visual supports to make the sequence of daily activities predictable and understandable
• Using visual supports to make individual tasks understandable

There are five elements of Structured Teaching that build on one another, and they all emphasize the importance of predictability and flexible routines in the classroom setting. Division TEACCH developed a visual tool to illustrate the Structured Teaching components—the Structured Teaching pyramid:
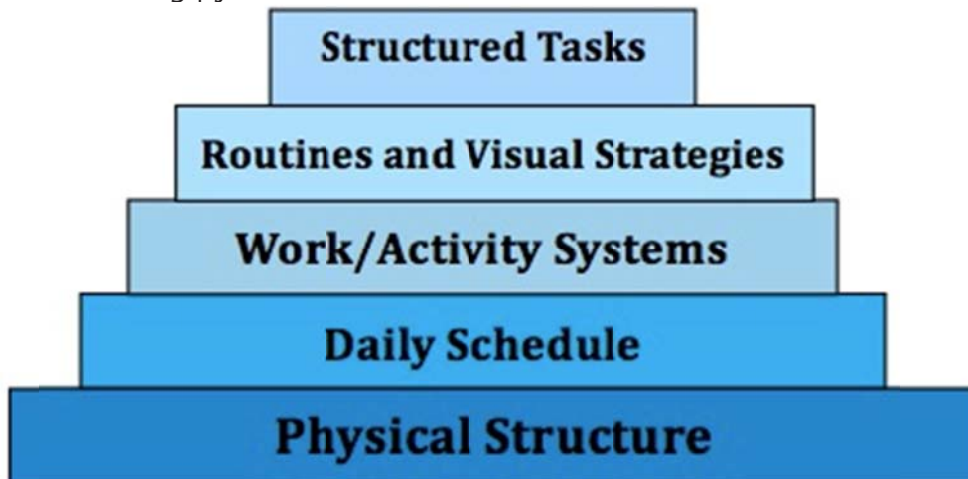
Before further exploring the use of structure in the environment, it will be helpful to briefly review some of the deficits of autism and how they can point to a need for structure when planning for successful learning experiences.

Receptive language difficulty is characteristic for autism. Many times a student cannot understand language as well as a teacher believes he can, and so may demonstrate aggressive behaviors or lack of initiative. He also may lack the necessary language to communicate things appropriately, and so can not let the teacher know when he is tired, hot, hungry, finished, or bored except by tantruming or aggression. He may have a poor sequential memory, and so he can not keep the order of even familiar events in his mind or is not sure when something different will happen. Often he feels more comfortable staying with familiar activities and will

resist learning new activities or routines. Many times he is unable to organize or put limits on his own behavior and does not understand or acknowledge society's rules. This can result in trying to get others' attention in inappropriate ways or preferring to be alone. Because of his lack of social relatedness he may be unmotivated to please others or unrewarded by praise, and consequently seems resistant to learning. Hypersensitivity to sensory input can often lead to disturbing behaviors. Being easily distracted and lacking skills in perception and organization of time can also lead to behaviors that get in the way of learning.

Providing structure and organization in the classroom or any other learning environment on a student's level of understanding can help to alleviate or moderate these problems and the resultant ineffective learning situations.

Physical structure

Physical structure refers to the students environment, such as a classroom and/or home. In a classroom setting these areas may include:
- One to one work area
- Independent work area
- Structured play area
- Group area
- Snack - Break
- Transition
- Others like Computer, Reading, Sensory

A physically organized classroom is likely to assist the student to predict what will happen during the day and thereby minimize distractibility. A disorganized classroom can pull the student's attention to irrelevant details and interrupt his/her ability to stay focused. Providing an environment that reduces distractions and is free of irrelevant stimuli and clutter can assist students in attending to relevant information.

Physical structure refers to the way furniture and materials are placed. Whether students are in mainstream classes or special classes, an organized classroom is key element. A disorganized classroom can pull a student´s attention to irrelevant details and interrupt his/her ability to stay focused.

When a student has learnt expected behavior for each space in the classroom, it is likely that those areas become powerful cues for appropriate behavior. So in it self, physically structured environment reduces unwanted behavior.

First, teachers have to identify the different areas they would like to create in the classroom. These typically relate to the individual curriculum (IEP), the age of the student and the activities taking place in the classroom.
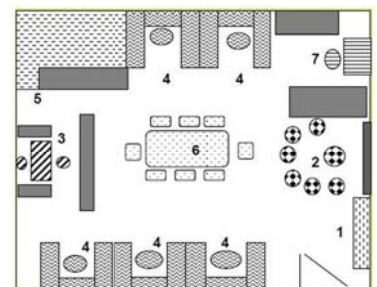
Then teachers need to segment the different areas by using visual cues or boundaries. Boundaries can be created with furniture (desks, shelves, tables) as well as with materials such as fabric, tape, rugs, labels, highlighting etc.

The final step is to teach the students what the expectations are for each area and how to move around. This may involve visual cues, practicing how to respond to the cues and completing activities in each classroom space. The teachers always have to evaluate what they have been designing and find out if the boundaries are meaningful for students. If it shows that the students have difficulties following the expectations, teachers may have to make the physical structure clearer and add visual cues.

We also have to keep in mind to minimize visual and auditory distractions when needed. If there is too much auditory or visual stimulus, it can lead to irrelevant focus or behavior. Sensory issues should always be assessed when organizing the environment, like noice, lightning, fabrics used etc.

Tips for implementing Physical Structure:
- Organize the classroom at the beginning of the school year and teach the students how to use each area. A structured classroom is likely to benefit all students, not only students with autism.
- Remember that needs for structure are not the same for all students so continued assessment of how the classroom environment is impacting student´s attention and behavior is required and regular changes have to be made.
- Here are some examples of Physical and visual boundaries that can be used to define areas in the classroom:

Independent work area
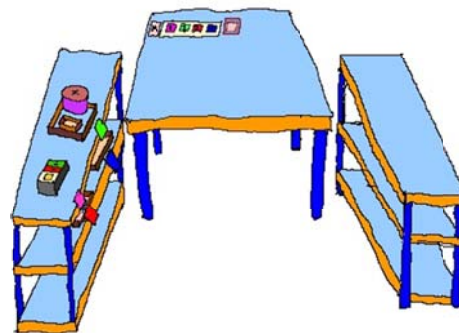
Independent work area

Group area

Independent work

Independent work area in Mainstream

Sensory – reducing noise

Visual Schedules

Schedules are a part of the classroom structure needed by autistic students. A daily visual schedule is a critical component in a structured environment. A visual schedule will tell the student with autism what activities will occur and in what sequence.

Visual schedules are important for children with autism because they:
- Help address the child's difficulty with sequential memory and organization of time.
- Assist children with language comprehension problems to understand what is expected of them.
- Lessen the anxiety level of children with autism, and thus reduce the possible occurrence of challenging behaviors, by providing the structure for the student to organize and predict daily and weekly events. Schedules clarify that activities happen within a specific time period (e.g., understanding that "break time" is coming, but after "work time"),   and also alert the student to any changes that might occur.
- Assist the student in transitioning independently between activities and environments by telling them where they are to go next. Visual schedules can be used in all environments (e.g., classroom, gym, Occupational Therapy, Speech/Language Therapy, home, Sunday School, etc.).
- Are based on a "first-then" strategy; that is, "first you do ___, then you do ___". This first-then strategy allows the "first" expectation (whether a task, activity or assignment) to be modified, as needed. The modification is in terms of task completion and amount of prompting, in order to accommodate the student's daily fluctuations in his ability to process in-coming information. Then he can move on to his next visually scheduled task/activity
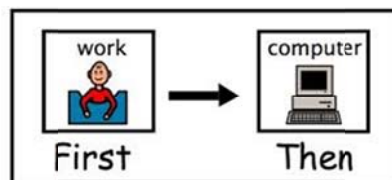
Example: A student is having particular difficulty completing a math work-sheet, due to anxiety, sensory processing difficulties communication, difficulty generalizing, internal/external distracters, change, etc. The assignment can be modified so that the child only has to complete three math problems first, and then he has a sensory break, as indicated on his visual schedule.

- Can incorporate various social interactions into the student's daily schedule (e.g. showing completed work to a teacher/parent for social reinforcement, requiring appropriate social greetings).
- Can increase a student's motivation to complete less desired activities by strategically alternating more preferred with less-preferred activities on the student's individual visual schedule.

Example: By placing a "computer" time after "math", the student may be more motivated to complete math knowing that "computer" time will be next.

- A visual schedule for a student with autism must be directly taught and consistently used. Visual schedules should not be considered as "crutches" for students with autism, from which they should gradually be "weaned". Instead, these individual visual schedules should be considered as "prosthetic" or "assistive tech" devices. For the student with autism, the consistent use of a visual schedule is an extremely important skill. It has the potential to increase independent functioning throughout his life - at school, home and community.
- Developing Visual Schedules: In general, schedules should be arranged from a "top-to-bottom" or "left-to-right" format, including a method for the student to manipulate the schedule to indicate that an activity is finished or "all done".

Example: Cross/mark off with a dry erase marker, place the item in an "all done" envelope/box, check off the item, draw a line through the scheduled activity, etc.

- A minimum of two scheduled items should be presented at a time so that the student begins to understand that events and activities happen in a sequential manner, not in isolation.
- Schedules can be designed using a variety of formats, depending upon the needs of the individual student.

Real objects

Pictures – one day

Pictures – one week

Example: Object schedule, 3 ring binder schedule, clipboard schedule, manila file folder schedules, dry erase board schedules, Velcro strip across the top of the desk, etc.

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- Various visual representation systems can be used for an individual visual schedule including:
  - Real objects;
  - Photographs (e.g., "Picture This" software program or own photos);
  - Realistic drawings;
  - Commercial picture system (e.g., "Boardmaker" software program);
  - Written words/lists.

Individual Schedule: It is necessary to develop an individual schedule for the child with autism in addition to the general classroom schedule.
- An individual schedule will give the child with autism important information in a visual form that he can readily understand.
- Another consideration when individualizing a schedule for a student with autism is the length of the schedule (number of activities). The length of the schedule may need to be modified due to the student becoming increasingly obsessed and/or anxious regarding an up-coming scheduled activity, or due to difficulty in processing "too much" information presented at once.

> **Example:** A particular student "obsesses" over recess. If at the beginning of his day he sees "recess" scheduled later in the morning, he will continue to be obsessed with "going out for recess", resulting in increased anxiety and distractibility for the rest of the morning activities until recess. The student's schedule could be created with a few activity items at a time, up until recess. Again, individualization is the key to success.

- **Check Schedule.** Some students may need a "check schedule" visual physical prompt to teach them to independently check their schedule, as well as learn the importance of their schedule.

> **Example:** "Check schedule" visual prompts can be made by writing the student's name on laminated colored paper strips or using popsicle sticks or poker chips with a large check printed on the chip, etc.

The "check schedule" prompts are visual and physical cues (as opposed to adult prompts) given to the student for any transition in his daily activities, to cue him to check his schedules.

A child who relies too heavily on adult prompts rather than using "check schedule" prompts in with his schedule, may have more difficulty understanding the importance of his schedule and have limited success in using it.

- **Transitions.** Some students may need to transition to the next scheduled activity by taking their scheduled item (card or object) off their individual schedule and carrying this with them to the next activity/location. This may be due to the child's increased distractibility in maneuvering through the environment. The distractibility, or inability to sustain attention throughout the transition, is independent of the child's cognitive functioning level or verbal skills.

Example: Some non-verbal students with autism, who function at a younger cognitive level, do not require transition schedule cards to get to the next scheduled activity. On the other hand certain higher functioning students with autism require a transition card to get to the next scheduled activity, due to their increased distractibility.

Following are some questions teachers need to consider when planning classroom and individual student schedules:
- Is the schedule clearly outlined so that teachers know all daily responsibilities?
- Is there a balance of individual, independent, group, and leisure activities incorporated daily?
- Do individual student schedules consider student needs for break times, reinforcement, unpreferred activities followed by preferred activities?
- Does the schedule help a student with transitions -- where to go and what to do?
- Does the schedule help a student know where and when to begin and end a task?
- How are transitions and changes in activity signaled? timer rings? teacher direction? student monitors clock?
- Is the schedule represented in a form that is easily comprehended by the student?

Work System

Research has shown that individuals with ASD demonstrate strength in visual learning. Visual supports organize a sequence of events, enhancing the individual´s ability to understand, anticipate, and participate in those events. The use of "work systems" has also shown that a student's overall productivity increases when the student has a way of knowing how much work there is to do, as well as when it is to be finished.

Work System, refers to the systematic and organized presentation of tasks/materials in order for students to learn to work independently, without adult directions/prompts. It is important to note that "work systems" can reflect any type of tasks or activities (e.g., academic, daily living skills, recreation and leisure, etc.). Each "work system", regardless of the nature of the specific task or activity, should address the following four questions:
- What is the work to be done? What is the nature of the task? (e.g., sorting by colors; adding/subtracting 2 digit numbers, making a sandwich, brushing teeth, etc.).
- How much work? Visually represent to the student exactly how much work is to be done. If the student is to cut out only 10 soup can labels, don't give him a whole stack and expect him to independently count and/or understand that he is to cut out only 10 soup can labels, for the task to be considered complete. Seeing the whole stack of labels - even if told that he is going to cut only ten - can cause a child with autism a great deal of frustration and anxiety in not being able to understand exactly how much work to complete.
- When am I finished? The student needs to independently recognize when he is finished with a task/activity. The task itself may define this, or the use of timers or visual cues, such as a red dot, to indicate where to stop on a particular worksheet, has proven effective.
- What comes next? Items such as physical reinforces, highly desired activities, break times or free choice are highly motivating toward task completion. In some cases, being "all done" with the task motivates the child enough to complete it.

Examples of various types of work systems, from easiest to most difficult, include:

Left to right sequence - finished box/basket/folder.

This is the most concrete level of "work systems" and involves placing items to be completed to the left of the person's workspace (e.g., a shelf, folder, basket/tub, etc.). The student is taught to take the items from the left, complete them at his work space in front of him, and then place the completed work to the right in an "all done" box, folder, basket, etc.

Matching - color, shape, alphabet, number.

This would be a higher level skill in that the person must complete his "work jobs" in a sequential order by matching color, shape, alphabet letter or number coding system.

Example: The student has a sequence strip of individual numbers 1-10 velcroed on their desk/work space. He also has multiple "work jobs" located on his left. To complete tasks in this work system (matching), he takes the number "1" off his number strip and matches it to the number "1" located on one of the work jobs. This is the job/task/activity he must complete first. He continues matching numbers to tasks in order to complete those tasks (work jobs) in a specified sequential order.

Written system.

This is the highest level of the work system. It would involve a written list of "work jobs" to be completed in sequential order.

Written instructions

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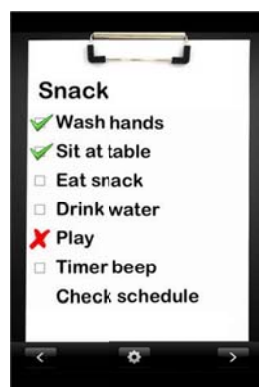
Routines

According to the TEACCH method, the most functional skill for autistic individuals is a routine which involves checking one's schedule and following the established work system. While all children benefit from routine in their daily lives, children with autism thrive on it! Routines will provide comfort and predictability and relieve much anxiety and uncertainty in a world that is, all too often, chaotic and unpredictable. The routines should also incorporate an element of flexibility because the world is invariable, which is what makes it so confusing to a person with ASD .

Important routines in Structured teaching :
- First/Then Routines (first work, then break)
- Reinforce the concepts of left to right and top to bottom in the schedule,
  work system and tasks.
- Check schedule
- Follow the Work System
- Teach the student to follow the Visual Supports

This routine can then be used throughout the person's lifetime and in multiple situations .

Tasks

The work designed to be carried out in the independent work area is known as TEACCH tasks. These activities contain all the materials and instructions required for the pupil to complete them independently. Tasks can be contained in boxes, baskets, in deep or flat trays, in plastic wallets, in folder, in files or on clipboards. One pupil may be able to access tasks of a variety of designs.

Tasks are designed to individual needs, skills and interests. Tasks should be designed to be motivating to the pupil.

Students need to be taught how to carry out tasks before they are presented in the independent work area.

Learning new tasks with the teacher

Tasks are to be based on meaningful IEP goals and they should have a clear beginning and end and set up in a way that the student knows exactly what to do in order to complete the task. This can be accomplished by using the physical structure of the task, by written information, highlighting essential information, by using arrows, outlines, real object model or pictures, etc. The containers for the materials help to organize the activity, the task should be one unit and materials be put in the order they are to be used.
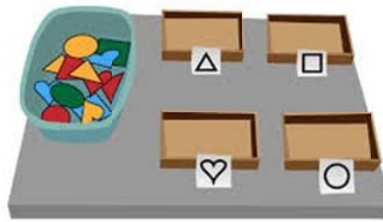
The rules :

- Match Tasks to IEP Objectives
- Clear Beginning and End
- Meaningful to the student
- Based on student's strengths and interests
- Can be performed independently

Sources:

Hume, K. 2008. Overview of Visual Supports. Chapel Hill, NC: National Professional Development Center on autism spectrum disorders, Frank Porter Graham Child Developmental Institute, The University of North Carolina.

Mesibov GB, Shea V, Shopler E. 2005. The TEACCH approach to autism spectrum disorders. Ney York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers

http://www.oaklands.hounslow.sch.uk/page/?pid=33 (3.12.2015)

http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm (Written by Susan Stokes under a contract with CESA 7 and funded by a discretionary grant from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction).

http://teacch.com/educational-approaches/structured-teaching-teacch-staff (26.11.2015)

http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm (26.11.2015)

http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/IRCA/Structured%20Teaching%20Strate-gies%20Article%201.pdf (26.11.2015)

http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/school_community_tool_kit.pdf

http://web.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/project/info.shtml (26.1.2014)

http://www.autismuk.com/?page_id=104#pagesection

https://www.teacch.com/about-us/what-is-teacch

http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd/index.shtml

http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/school_community_tool_kit.pdf

Chapter 3. Comunication

3.1. Communication and Social Skills

Communication is the process of sending and receiving information between people. Communication is much more than words, such as movement, gestures, use of the voice, tone, glance, facial expressions etc. From the beginning communication steps to more abstract are:

- Keep attention on face
- Look at object and then at you
- Know how to get attention
- Use signals, objects, pictures
- Concrete thinking
- Connect objects and actions
- Abstract thinking

Early research on language development, have showed us that consistent daily routines increase receptive skills and intent (Bruner and Piaget), so Structured Teaching (STM) is based on that philosophy.

Listed below is a collection of suggestions for setting up communicative situations that are meaningful and motivating to the child. Many involve play. Some involve problem-solving situations. All involve good timing, especially "waiting", on the part of the adult who sets up the situation and responds to the child's communicative attempts.

Engage in a fun - play routine several times, then pause and wait for the child to re-initiate the routine. If the play routine involves motor movements, simple language, and a particular object, then the child has several options for HOW to re-start the pleasurable routine.

Examples:
- blowing bubbles / balloons
- pillow games
- physical interactions such as tickles or swings
- motor games / songs rolling / spinning object

Routines support initiations because they are predictable, repetitive and often with high interest and they always have the same beginning and end.

Setting up obstacles to desired objects or activities can increase communication.

Examples:
- things that are out of reach but in view
- stand in front of doorway/destination
- containers that child cannot open independently
- toys with mechanism the child cannot operate independently

Set up problem-solving situations.

Examples:
- leave out pieces of a puzzle or other motivating toy / game
- put in extra pieces that do not go with an activity
- give Dad's shoes instead of own
- put block on plate at snack time
- leave out needed tool / object, such as spoon when eating
- spill something

Be observant for situations that the child dislikes.
Before negative behaviors become a problem, teach the child to communicate finished" or "stop" or "take a break", then respect this communication.

Examples:
- offer disliked foods and teach acceptable way of rejecting
- teach "take a break" in the middle of stressful situation, such as a haircut, but then go back to it after a break is given.

Sussman, Fern. "More than words"

Offer choices, making them visual, whenever possible, throughout the day.

Examples:
- foods and drinks
- toys / videos / songs
- places to go
- clothes to wear

(Sussman, Fern. "More than words"

Practice turn-taking during motivating activities, using a visual cue along with verbal cues for whose turn.

Examples of visual cues:
- hand held out palm first toward person whose turn it is
- pass object back and forth to signal turn (game pieces, microphone)
- name card or picture signals turn
- special button or hat signals turn

Key Points to Remember[2]:

1. We are teaching the child both HOW to communicate (a system) and WHY to communicate (interaction).

2. Multi-modal communication (combining gesture, pictures, words, objects) is GOOD and helps the child learn both HOW and WHY more rapidly. Respond to the child's communicative intent whenever possible, whether he uses a spoken word, a gesture, a picture, an object, etc.

3. Visual supports for communication with children with autism are critically important because they:
- are stable over time
- attract and hold attention
- use strong learning modality
- reduce anxiety
- make concepts more concrete
- help isolate the concept that communication is to another person
- are a good prompting technique

(picture 24)

(picture 25)

Use snack and mealtimes for communication training

4. To help your child understand you and also develop his own expressive language:
- Limit your own language to words he knows, and try to use the same words each time in the same situation.
- Use short, simple sentences or phrases.
- Speak slowly and clearly, and WAIT.
- Exaggerate your tone of voice and facial expression.
- Use gestures or other visuals (pictures, objects, print words) paired with your verbal language.
- When the child is stressed or upset, reduce your verbal language and increase use of visual supports.
- Imitate what your child says, and expand on it slightly.
- When you notice your child engaged in something that interests him, use simple language to describe what he is doing. Pairing words with actions makes them more meaningful.

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[2] Susan Boswell, TEACCH
(http://teacch.com/communication-approaches-2/communication-incentives-susan-boswell)

Communicating effectively

The following guidelines on communicating with pupils who have an ASD may also prove helpful with a wider range of pupils. The level of language can be adjusted as appropriate to the pupils concerned. Visual aids may also need to be used, especially with children who have little or no speech, but these can also be useful with children whose speech may be more developed.

- Be as clear in your communication as possible and say exactly what you mean. Any thing merely implied will probably not be understood. For example, asking, 'Would you like to get your work out now?' may get the very honest (but unintentionally annoying) answer, 'No!' Similarly, you may ask, 'Can you just sit over there?' or 'Can you pick up that piece of paper and put it in the bin?' and get the answer 'Yes', followed by no action: the answer has been truthful, but the pupil may well not have understood that you were actually asking them to carry out the action

- Keep your language direct, avoiding the use of double meanings, sarcasm, teasing, complex open questions or subtle jokes, unless you are really sure the pupil understands. Make sure that you have his attention before communicating. Use his name, but don't necessarily expect to gain full eye contact – this can be difficult for pupils with an ASD.

- You will probably need to slow down your communication – allow several seconds for the pupil to process new information and to respond before you give more information, or repeat your request.

- Check that he understands what he has to do in class or for homework. He may not necessarily understand just because he can repeat back the instruction you have just given. Processing verbal information tends to be harder for pupils with an ASD. Visual aids can help.

- Make sure that the pupil knows what is expected of him in school, for example, where he should be in the classroom or for each lesson; how to negotiate around the school site; what homework is expected; where he is able to go at break and lunchtime, if being in the playground causes too much stress, or what time the day trip will return to school. Most difficulties occur as a result of insufficient information about what to do in different social situations.

- Be patient. A few pupils will seem to be intentionally aloof (avoiding eye contact), rude or disinterested. This is rarely the case. Pupils with an ASD usually do not have the basic social understanding to realise how they appear to others. Occasionally they may say or do things that seem to threaten your authority in school. Try not to take this personally, but deal with it in a calm way. The person's difficulties are the result of biological differences in the parts of the brain that regulate social behaviour and understanding.

- Ensure that there is a planned exit strategy available if a pupil has difficulty regulating his behavior in class, for example, a quiet room he can go to when stress levels get too high, or a particular quiet area.

- Avoid confronting an angry/upset pupil by arguing or raising your voice. Many people with an ASD are very sensitive to noise, some finding loud noise physically painful. A raised voice will not help him understand what is wanted. Use a calm, neutral tone of voice – do not shout, or expect him to be able to read facial expression and gesture. Instead try to divert and defuse the situation. For example, allow the pupil to 'exit', giving a clear alternative choice, a compromise if possible. Sometimes a visual support, such as a card with a photo of the quiet room, will help him to understand what you want him to do next. If there is no room for compromise, make the request a couple of times, allowing plenty of time for him to process this information, then calmly, with few words, follow through the consequences of non-compliance if necessary (which

should already have been explained very simply and clearly).
- Home/school diaries and/or school planners can help reinforce what is being communicated and keep parents informed.

Sources:

Autism Spectrum Disorders. A Resource pack for schools NAS 2014.
http://www.autism.org.uk/~/media/NAS/Documents/Working with/Education/AutismAResourcePackForSchoolStaff-Sept2015.ashx

Useful resources related to effective communication can be found at:
- www.autism.org.uk/visualsupports
- www.autism.org.uk/environment, www.do2learn.com
- www.asdvisualaids.com, www.pecs-unitedkingdom.com

Sussman, Fern: More than words. 1999. A Hanen Centre Publications

Social skills
Supporting social interaction is an important piece of the student's educational plan. Student's with autism often have the desire to interact with others, but do not have the skills to engage appropriately or may be overwhelmed by the process. Some students are painfully aware of their social deficits and will avoid interactions even though they desperately want to connect with others. Others will engage in attention seeking behavior to connect with others until they build the skills they need to interact.

Social development represents a range of skills, including timing and attention, sensory integration and communication, that can be built and layered to improve social competence. Building competence will result in further interest and interaction.

Strategies for Supporting Social Skill Development
Reinforce what the student does well socially.

Model social interaction, turn taking and reciprocity.

Teach imitation, motor as well as verbal.

Teach context clues and referencing those around you (for example, 'if everyone else is standing, you should be too!').

Break social skills into small component parts. Use visuals as appropriate.

Use strenghts to motivate interest in social interactions or give a student a chance to shine and be viewed as competent and interesting. Many students with autism have a good sense of humor, a love of or affinity for music, strong rote memorization skills, or a heightened sense of color or visual perspective.

Identify peers who model strong social skills and pair the student with them. Provide peers with strategies for eliciting communication or other targeted objectives, but be careful not to turn the peer into a teacher - try to keep peer interactions as natural as possible.

Support peers and student with structured social situations. Define expectations of behavior in advance. (For example, first teach the necessary skill, such as how to play a game in 1:1 settings, and then introduce it in a social setting with peers.)

Provide structured activities during recess.

During group activities define the student's role and responsibilities within the group.

Educate peers, establish learning teams or circles of friends to build a supportive community.

Use video modeling to teach social behavior.

Use social narratives and social cartooning as tools in describing and defining social rules and expectations.

Develop listening and attending skills and teach ways to show others that he is listening.

Teach a highly verbal student to recognize how, when and how much to talk about himself or his interests. Directly teach the skills relating to what topics to talk about with others, being aware of a conversational partner's likes and dislikes and reading from their body language and facial expressions.

Teach social boundaries—things you should not talk about (or whom you might talk to about sensitive subjects) and maintaining personal space (an arm's length is often used as a measurable distance between two people.)

Use Social Stories ™ to explain social situations (see 3.2. Social Stories ™ by Carol Gray)

Use Comic Strips Conversations (see 3.3. Comic Strips Conversations)

Use Social Thinking and CAT-kit strategies (see 3.4)

For more information:
Carol Gray´s new website: www.carolgraysocialstories.com
The CAT kit: www.thecatkit.com
Michelle Garcia Winner´s website: www.socialthinking.com
Comic Strips Conversations: http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/strategies-and-approaches/social-stories-and-comic-strips/comic-strip-conversations.aspx
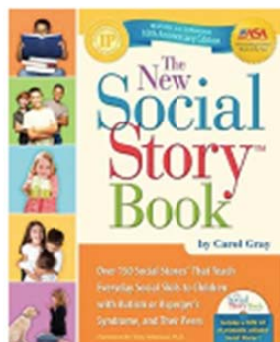
Carol Gray´s books can be ordered at www.amazon.com

Michelle Garcia Winner´s book can be ordered at www.socialthinking.com

3.2. Social Stories™

Carol Gray is the developer of Social Stories™. She originally developed Social Stories™ in 1991 and since then, she has been modifying the guidelines for writing Social Stories™, based on personal experience and feedback from Social Story™ writers and the students themselves.

We first learned about Social Stories™ in the year 1995, when Sigrún attended a workshop in the USA and then introduced the method to us, fellow teachers in the Special Unit for students with autism in Digranesskóli, Kópavogur, Iceland. We started immediately to write Social Stories™ for our students and found out that the method was highly useful and helped many of our students to better social understanding, which often led to positive changings in their behavior. Difficult behavior is very often because the student doesn´t understand what is going on or what is going to happen. Although the goal of a Social Story™ should never be to change the individual's behavior, improved understanding of events and expectations may lead to more effective responses. Over the years, we have been following Mrs. Gray´s Social Stories™ development, as well as listening to her lecture to reading her books and her website.

Everyone, who knows a student with Autism well, can write and use Social Stories™, after having learned the method. We highly recommend that parents, teachers and assistant teachers learn the method and start using it, in most cases it makes the life for the students so much easier.

Carol Gray´s latest Social Stories™ guidelines, Social Stories™ 10.1 criteria, from her book from 2010; The New Social Story™ Book are introduced in this chapter.

Before reading the Criterions, let´s start with one Social Story™ from the book:

What Is Practice?

Students learn many important skills. Reading is a skill. Math, writing, and spelling are skills, too. Practice is one way that students learn.

Sometimes, teachers ask students to practice skills.
Practice is carefully doing a skill over and over.

When students learn to add, they practice by solving many math problems.

When students learn to write, they practice making letters by writing each letter many times.

When students learn to spell a word, they practice spelling it correctly.

Practice helps students learn many important skills. (Page 186)

The 1st Criterion: The Goal
Definition: The goal of a Social Story™ is to share accurate information using a process, format, voice, and content that is descriptive, meaningful, and physically, socially, and emotionally safe for the Audience. Every Social Story™ has an overall patient and reassuring tone.
(The New Social Stories™Book by Carol Gray, 2010)

The 2nd Criterion: Two-Step Discovery
Definition: Keeping the goal in mind, Authors gather relevant information to 1) improve their understanding of the Audience in relation to situation, skill, concept, and/or 2) identify the specific topic (s) and type (s) of information to share in the Story.

The 3rd Criterion: Three Parts and a Title
Definition: A Social Story™ has a title and introduction that clearly identifies the topic, a body that adds detail, and a conclusion that reinforces and summarizes the information.

The 4th Criterion: FOURmat!
Definition: A Social Story™ has a format that clarifies content and enchances meaning for the Audience.

The 5th Criterion: Five Factors Define Voice and Vocabulary
Definition: A Social Story™ has a patient and supportive "voice" and vocabulary that is defined by five factors. These factors are:
1. First-or Third Person Perspective
2. Positive and Patient Tone
3. Past, Present and/or Future Tense
4. Literal Accuracy
5. Accurate Vocabulary

The 6th Criterion: Six Questions Guide Story Development
Definition: A Social Story™ answers relevant "wh" questions, describing the context (where); time-related information (when); relevant people (who); important cues (what); basic activities, behaviors, or statement (how); and the reasons and/or rationale behind them (why).

The 7th Criterion: Seven Types of Social Story™ Sentences
Definition: A Social Story™ is comprised of Descriptive Sentences (objective statements of fact and/or the information that "everyone knows"), with an option to include any one or more of the following sentence types: Perspective Sentences (that describe the thoughts, feelings, and/or beliefs of other people); Three Sentences that Coach (that identify a) suggested

responses for the Audience, b) responses for his or her team, and/or c) self-coaching statements); Affirmative Sentences (that enhance the meaning of surrounding statements); and Partial Sentences (developed from any sentence to encourage Audience participation and check for comprehension).

The 8th Criterion: A GR-EIGHT Formula
Description: One Formula and Seven Sentence Types ensure that every Social Story™ describes more than directs.

The 9th Criterion: Nine Makes It Mine
Definition: Whenever possible, a Social Story™ is tailored to the individual preferences, talents, and interests of its Audience.

The 10th Criterion: Ten Guides to editing and Implementation
Definition: The ten guides to Editing and Implementation ensure that the goal that guides Social Story™ development is also evident in its editing and use.
(Carol Gray, 2010)

This Criterion focuses on implementation. You will need a rough draft of a Social Story™ that you have written and these ten guides will help you to determine if your story has the charateristics of a Social Story™.
1. Editing. That means that you compare your Social Story™ to the Social Story™ Criteria and make revisions if necessary.
2. Plan for Comprehension. Does the student understand the text? Would Partial Sentences be helpful?
3. Plan Story Support. Are there any other techniques that you should use to support the story, Posters, PowerPoint etc.?
4. Plan Story Review. A very important point is that you always introduce a Social Story™ with a positive tone and in a comfortable setting. A Social Story™ is never ever used as a consequence for difficult behavior. Authors have to use common sense when deciding how often a Social Story™ is used.
5. Plan a Positive Introduction. You may introduce your Social Story™ by telling the student that this is a story you wrote specially for him. It is good to sit by the student so the focus will be on the story itself.
6. Monitor! Once a Social Story™ has been introduced, the author has to look carefully for reactions from the student. Sometimes, illustration may be disturbing. If the story is successful, keep in mind how it is written to use in coming stories.
7. Organize Stories. Keep ally your Social Stories™ in a Folder/Ring-Notebook or similar and make them easy to access when needed.
8. Mix and Match Stories to build Concepts. Keep in mind that stories can be copied and placed in a special book. For example all stories about school can be kept in one book, titled "School". Within that book, stories may be divided by topics, years etc.
9. Story Re-Runs and Sequels. A Social Story™ may be reintroduced and uptated.
10. Recycle Instruction into Applause. A Social Story™ that originally was about learning new skills, may be rewritten into a Story that applauds the Mastery of those skills.

Let´s take a further look at the 7th Criterion; The seven types of Social Story™ Sentences.

Descriptive Sentences are the main sentences in a Social Story™ and the only ones required, all other types of sentences are optional. Descriptive Sentences are about facts, they describe situations, activity, skill or concept as objective as possible.

>Sample Descriptive Sentences:
>*A mistake is an answer, idea or act that is an error. When someone says or does something that is not right, it´s a mistake.*
>*Mistakes are a part of Life on Planet Earth. That is okay.*

Perceptive Sentences refer to a person´s state, knowledge, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, opinions, motivation or physical health (pg. lvi). They most often refer to the status of another person or people.

>Sample Perceptive Sentences:
>*Sometimes, people know they have made a mistake.*
>*Most people try to answer questions correctly.*

Sentences that Coach describe a suggested behavior or response or self-coaching strategies. They are to be used carefully. Sentences that begin with I will try or I will work on, place the emphasis on the students effort but sentences that coach may also include a list of options as in: I have a choice, I may choose…

>Sample Sentences that coach include:
>*I will try to …*
>*I may choose to …*
>*My mom will be with me …*
>*Mom or Dad will help me to …*

Affirmative Sentences may be a part of a Social Story™. They often express shared value or opinions. Their role is to stress something which is important, refer to rules or to reassure. They usually follow a Descriptive, Perspective or a Coaching Sentence.

>Sample Affirmative Sentences:
>*Students usually stay in line entering the Dining room. This is very important.*
>*Sometimes the Teacher has to go to a meeting. This is OK. Then….*

Partial Sentences are sentences that incorporate a fill-in-the-blank format. They are to check comprehension or to encourage the student to decide the response of another or his/her own response.

>Sample Partial Sentences:
>*We often use Raincoats when it is raining. That helps to keep us _____.*
>*Wrapping hides a gift, and helps to keep it a _____.*

>The Social Story™ Formula, ensures that every Social Story™ describes more than it directs.

There should be more than a half of sentences that describe than sentences that coach. That means an unlimited number of Descriptive, Perspective and Affirmative Sentences and a limited number of Coaching sentences. This is essential to writing a Social Story™.
(Carol Gray. 2010. The New Social Story™ Book. Arlington, USA. Future Horizons).

Sources:

Carol Gray on YouTube explaining Social Stories: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjlIYYbVIrI

Carol Gray´s website: www.carolgraysocialstories.com

3. 3. Comic Strips Conversations

As Social Stories™, Comic Strip Conversations are originally written by Carol Gray. In her book from 1994; Comic Strips Conversations, Carol Gray explains what these are and gives examples of how to use this method. Comic Strip Conversations are based on the belief that visualization and visual supports are found useful in structuring the learning of students with autism. They are a conversation between two or more people, incorporating the use of simple drawings. They illustrate an ongoing conversation, meaning, you draw while you are talking together.
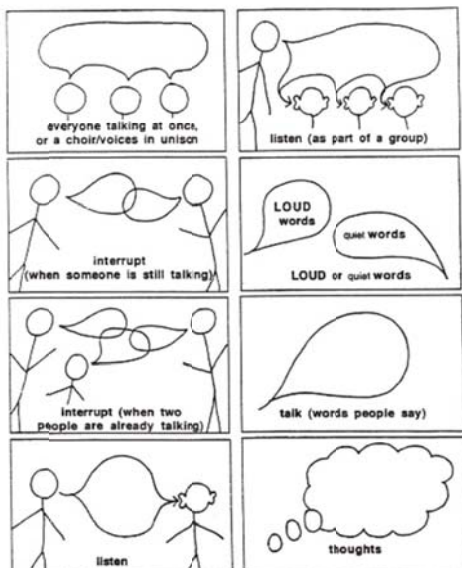
The symbols that can be used in Comic Strip Conversations

Comic strip conversations can help people with autism to understand concepts that they find particularly difficult. People draw as they talk and use these drawings to learn about different social situations.

In a comic strip conversation, the person with autism takes the lead role with parents, carers and teachers offering support and guidance.

Conversations are usually started with small talk (for example, talking about the weather) to get people familiar with drawing whilst talking and to mimic ordinary social interactions. Following this, the support person may ask a range of questions about a specific situation or type of social interaction. The person with autism answers by speaking and drawing their response.

Colour could be used to indicate the feelings or ideas of people involved in the situation and to help the person with autism to better understand the perspectives of others.

For complex situations, or for people who have difficulty reporting events in sequence, comic strip boxes may be used, or drawings can be numbered in the sequence in which they occur.

Before finishing a comic strip conversation, go back and summarize the event or situation you've discussed using the drawings as a guide. After this, think about how you can address any problems or concerns that have been identified. You can then develop an action plan for similar situations in the future. This will be a helpful guide for the person with autism.

Comic strip conversations can also be used to plan for a situation in the future that may be causing anxiety or concern, for example an exam or a social event. However, remember that plans can sometimes change. It's important to present the information in a way which allows for unexpected changes to a situation. (Carol Gray. 1994).

Our experience with Comic Strips Conversations:
Mostly, we have used this method with young people on the autistic spectrum (age 16-20). We have as well used it with non-autistic students in Elementary School, in group situations where there has been a conflict between individuals.

The main benefits in using Comic Strip Conversation in our opinion are:
- The focus is on the drawings, not eye contact, which can be difficult for people with autism.
- This method slows the conversations down, which gives students an important time to think and switch from one thought to another.
- You can keep the conversations papers in a folder, which means that it is easy to refer to later. (Important to put date marks on the papers).
- We find it better to use fewer symbols than too many, so we have simplified the method. We only use balloons for words and thoughts, a heart for feelings and simple drawings of people.
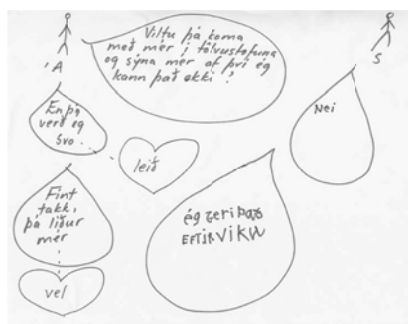
Here, both the teacher (Á) and the student (S) draw and write.

Sources:

Carol Gray. 1994. Comic Strips Conversations. Jenison Public Schools, Jenison, Michigan. USA).

http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/strategies-and-approaches/social-stories-and-
-comic-strips/comic-strip-conversations.aspx (2.12.2015)

3.4 The CAT KIT

The CAT-kit was originally designed in Denmark for children and young people with Aspergers Syndrome by Psychologist Kirsten Callesen and Psychologist Annette Møller Nielsen in cooperation with Dr. Tony Attwood.

The CAT-kit has proven valuable for parents, teachers, counselors as well as therapists and other professionals working with children, adolescents and adults focusing on enhancing self-insight, assertiveness, behavioral strategies and social interplay.

The CAT-kit elements can easily be integrated in any CBT programme when working with children in general as well as persons with Autism, Aspergers Syndrome, OCD, ADHD and impaired perception.

In the Scandinavian countries the CAT-kit is used in schools, special education, institutions and psychiatric therapy.

(http://cat-kit.com/?lan=en&area=catbox&page=catbox) 11.08.2015

We, the authors of this TOOLKIT, translated The CAT-kit into Icelandic in the year 2005 and since then, we have been giving courses to parents and professionals about using the material with students with Autism, as well as using the CAT-kit in our work as teachers and counselors. We find the CAT-kit highly useful in teaching students social understanding as well as discussing feelings and emotions. The CAT-kit is being used in many schools in Iceland.

You will find further information on www.cat-kit.com. The website offers possibilities to download some of the CAT-kit elements.

Chapter 4. Setting up a Classroom

TEACCH's position on inclusion of children with autism can be stated as follows:

      1. The TEACCH program recognizes the important value of preparing all persons with autism for successful functioning within society. Each person with autism should be taught with the goal of successful functioning with a few restrictions as possible.

      2. Decisions about including children with autism into fully integrated settings must be made consistent with the principle of the "least restrictive environment" as a guiding principle. No person with autism should be unnecessarily or inappropriately denied access to meaningful educational activities. However, it should be noted that the concept of least restrictive environment requires that appropriate learning take place. Placement decisions also require that students be capable of meaningful learning and functioning within the setting selected.

      3. Activities which are inclusive for children with autism should be offered based on an individual assessment of the child's skills and abilities to function and participate in the setting. Inclusion activities are appropriate only when preceded by adequate assessment and pre-placement preparations including appropriate training. (Inclusion activities typically need to be supported by professionals trained in autism who can provide assistance and objective evaluation of the appropriateness of the activity).

      4. Inclusion should never replace a full continuum of service delivery, with different students with autism falling across the full spectrum. Full inclusion should be offered to all persons with autism who are capable of success in fully integrated settings. Partial inclusion is expected to be appropriate for other clients with autism. And special classes and schools should be retained as an option for those students with autism for whom these settings are the most meaningful and appropriate."
(http://teacch.com/educational-approaches/inclusion-for-children-with-autism-the-teacch-position 26.11.2015)

Students with ASD may be included in some classes and not others.

The high functional students (e.g., those with Asperger's) may be most readily included in academic classes, while special services may have to be provided at less structured times.

In some instance peer buddy systems and other supports may appropriately be used. For students with ASD who have greater cognitive and behavioral challenges, inclusion may occur only in very specific context where high levels of adult support can be provided. Successful Integration can only be achieved when we take into account their unique and alternative ways of thinking and viewing the world.

Because students with Autism may be hypersensitive to aspects of their environment, they may be become overwhelmed or distracted, either by switching off from the immediate surroundings and tasks or showing inappropriate behaviors. It may be the only way the student can communicate his real needs and wants.

To ensure that all students, regardless of age, are prepared for their first session at a new school or a new class, one of the most important strategies is familiarization. Because of their often difficulties with change, this is very important. Arrange an initial visit out of school hours. Provide parents with photographs of the building and key staff members. When visiting, use the exact entrance route (including the cloakroom/locker/toilets etc.). Allow the student to wander and explore and plan further visits, if necessary.

- When moving from one place to another, some students may benefit from a small hand-held card, to remind them of where to go and also occupy their often busy hands.
- Write on the card or put some picture on it, saying where to go.

Assembly
- Typically difficult for students with Autism
- Some prefer to withdraw
- Try rewards to encourage participation in assemblies (computer-time etc.)
- Type of assembly can matter
- Seat the student at the end of a row

Dining hall
- Usually, some degree of support necessary
- In some cases, provision of screened area
- Allowed to dine in a safe area or a quiet room

Physical positioning
- Personal space
- Good sitting
- Physical withdrawal
- Line up
    - Call line up differently
    - Teach good standing technique (feet still, hands by sides)

Verbal instructions:
Three golden rules for verbal instructions:
1. Keep it simple
2. Be specific
3. Be direct

Work stations areas:
- Schools working inclusively with pupils with ASD recognize the need to provide all ASD pupils with some form of quiet working area to retreat to as required.
- This enables greater focus and concentration on the working task.
- Some pupils may only need a quiet working area for subjects they have difficulty in.
- Avoid using any quiet working area as a disciplining or free time space as well.
- Keep the working area as uncluttered as possible.
- For some, this may mean having nothing than essential working material
- For others, it may extend to a visual timetable, in- and out-trays etc.

Techniques and equipment for use in workstation areas
- Name labelling
- In – and – out trays
- Visual timetables
- Work materials
- The TEACCH Model!
- Pupils typically respond better to visual rather than verbal prompts and instructions
- If you can see it or touch it, it must be real!
  Examples - Timers
          - STOP-cards
          - Changing for PE
          - Playtimes
          - Asking for help

Specific subject areas: Literacy
- Some students may benefit from drawing a picture of their story subject first
- Some may benefit from telling alternate sentences to staff to write for them (teacher assistant/shadow could do that)
- Use newspaper or magazine reports of a pupil´s particular interests

History:
- Use pictures/picture story boards to support verbal material
- Set realistic and achievable targets
- School or museum visits: have to be carefully prepared
  – Pictures, social stories etc.

PE
- Any new or challenging PE activity or game should be broken into small, easily achievable steps
- Be aware of physical contact
- May need extra support
- Teach game rules (Social stories)
- Video-modelling

Maths
- Use interests to teach certain strategies like
  – Decimals; ten tracks on a favorite CD makes a whole, one track is a tenth or 0.1...
- Use supporting visual tools like
  – Counters, number rulers, money etc.
- Use tangible or edible items when teaching less and more and division
- Use pupils interests whenever possible
  – Example: Presidents

Art:
- Be aware of that some students dislike or are obsessive to certain working materials (texture, smell etc.)
- It may be necessary to provide some alternative materials
- Limit the choice of working materials,
    - too many may be confusing

Personal social education
- Early intervention, fully supported and agreed with parents, is the most sensible way of approaching difficulties regarding lack of personal hygiene
- Personal hygiene-tasks should be considered as any other learning tasks in IEP
    - Break into small steps
    - Adapt language
    - Use visual prompts and sequencing as needed
- Peer support
- Sometimes ignore behavior
- Written instructions, step by step if needed
- Visual support system at the toilet room
- One-to-one support where necessary

Homework:
- Many students with autism are resistant to homework
- If possible, homework within the school period
- Visually clear what to do
- Cooperation with parents – assistance if needed
- Is it necessary?

An American Speech-Language Pathologist, Linda Hodgdon, has written 11 essentials that every classroom must have for the success of students with autism and aspergers (ASD). The list can be used as a checklist.

One thing that we know is that the majority of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (and lots of other students, too) are visual learners. You'll see lots of visual tools on my essentials list.

(1) Camera
This can be one of your most powerful communication tools. Take pictures of everything. Use them in the phone or print the pictures as needed. Use your photos for conversation starters, demonstration tools or reminders to help students remember what to bring to school tomorrow.

(2) Calendar
Posted on a wall, written in a notebook or accessed on a smart phone, the calendar is an essential tool for helping students orient to their flow of life.

(3) Schedule

The daily schedule has finally become one of the most used visual tools. That's because it works really well to help students follow their daily routines.

(4) Predictable routine

Predictable does not mean rigid. Students will follow routines, demonstrate less stress and exhibit better behavior when they know what to expect. Cameras, calendars and schedules are some of the really useful tools to help students understand when something expected is changing or when something new is going to occur.

(5) Quiet spot (not punishment)

Sometimes things get too fast, too noisy or just plain too much. There can be many causes. Those are the times when some of our students start "bouncing off the walls," "melting down," or showing us in many ways that things are not going well. This is when adults naturally start talking too much to try to calm things down. Instead, a goal is to teach students to use a "quiet spot" which is a designated location that will help them regroup.

(6) Visual tools

Pictures, objects, written language and anything else VISUAL is used to support communication. The calendar and schedule are just two visual tools. A supportive environment will provide a variety of other visual supports to assist students in multiple ways for successful participation.

(7) Note pad & pencil

No matter how much pre-planning you do, stuff happens. The temptation during those times is to try to talk it through. The problem with that strategy is that it often doesn't work. Especially when students are confused, upset or when they don't understand, that pencil & paper can become a lifesaver.

(8) Proper work environments

Individual students may have specific needs. Think about sensory needs related to things such as sound, sight, or touch. Size or shape of furniture, location of activities, or actions of other students can be significant. What distractions or disturbances can affect a student's success?

(9) Organized work spaces

Label the environment so students know where to go, what to do and where things belong. Make sure work places contain the correct materials or that students know appropriate procedures to solve problems in work settings.

(10) Rules

What are the rules? Everyone needs to know. Too many is not good. Some are location specific. Identify the important ones. Post them. Review them. timers, phones or watches with a timer function or timers on an iPad or computer are all great options.

(11) Effective communication partners

Staff who are committed to using multiple forms of communication help students achieve success. Showing instead of telling makes a huge difference for student success.

(http://usevisualstrategies.com/12-essentials-every-classroom-must-have-for-autism-aspergers-success/ 16.11.2015)

These 11 essentials can be useful for every class with ASD students and most of them are about structure and organization, how we organize the environment and how we visualize what is going to happen.
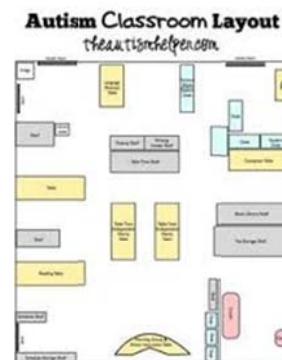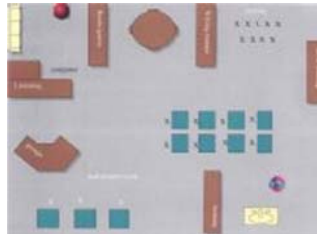
We have found TIPS FOR TEACHING HIGH FUNCTIONING PEOPLE WITH AUTISM by Susan Moreno and Carol O'Neal, very useful:

1) People with autism have trouble with organizational skills, regardless of their intelligence and/or age. Even a "straight A" student with autism who has a photographic memory can be incapable of remembering to bring a pencil to class or of remembering a deadline for an assignment. In such cases, aid should be provided in the least restrictive way possible. Strategies could include having the student put a picture of a pencil on the cover of his notebook or maintaining a list of assignments to be completed at home. Always praise the student when he remembers something he has previously forgotten. Never denigrate or "harp" at him when he fails. A lecture on the subject will not only NOT help, it will often make the problem worse. He may begin to believe he cannot remember to do or bring these things. These students seem to have either the neatest or the messiest desks or lockers in the school. The one with the messiest desk will need your help in frequent cleanups of the desk or locker so that he can find things. Simply remember that he is probably not making a conscious choice to be messy. He is most likely incapable of this organizational task without specific training. Attempt to train him in organizational skills using small, specific steps.

2) People with autism have problems with abstract and conceptual thinking. Some may eventually acquire abstract skills, but others never will. When abstract concepts must be used, use visual cues, such as drawings or written words, to augment the abstract idea. Avoid asking vague questions such as, "Why did you do that?" Instead, say, "I did not like it when you slammed your book down when I said it was time for gym. Next time put the book down gently and tell me you are angry. Were you showing me that you did not want to go to gym, or that you did not want to stop reading?" Avoid asking essay-type questions. Be as concrete as possible in all your interactions with these students.

3) An increase in unusual or difficult behaviors probably indicates an increase in stress. Sometimes stress is caused by feeling a loss of control. Many times the stress will only be alleviated when the student physically removes himself from the stressful event or situation. If this occurs, a program should be set up to assist the student in re-entering and/or staying in the stressful situation. When this occurs, a "safe-place" or "safe-person" may come in handy.

4) Do not take misbehavior personally. The high-functioning person with autism is not a manipulative, scheming person who is trying to make life difficult. They are seldom, if ever, capable of being manipulative. Usually misbehavior is the result of efforts to survive experiences which may be confusing, disorienting or frightening. People with autism are, by virtue of their disability, egocentric. Most have extreme difficulty reading the reactions of others.

5) Most high-functioning people with autism use and interpret speech literally. Until you know the capabilities of the individual, you should avoid:
- idioms (e.g., save your breath, jump the gun, second thoughts)
- double meanings (most jokes have double meanings)
- sarcasm (e.g., saying, "Great!" after he has just spilled a bottle of ketchup on the table)
- nicknames
- "cute" names (e.g., Pal, Buddy, Wise Guy)

6) Remember that facial expressions and other social cues may not work. Most individuals with autism have difficulty reading facial expressions and interpreting "body language."

7) If the student does not seem to be learning a task, break it down into smaller steps or present the task in several ways (e.g., visually, verbally, physically).

8) Avoid verbal overload. Be clear. Use shorter sentences if you perceive that the student is not fully understanding you. Although he probably has no hearing problem and may be paying attention, he may have difficulty understanding your main point and identifying important information.

9) Prepare the student for all environmental and/or changes in routine, such as assembly, substitute teacher and rescheduling. Use a written or visual schedule to prepare him for change.

10) Behavior management works, but if incorrectly used, it can encourage robot-like behavior, provide only a short term behavior change or result in some form of aggression. Use positive and chronologically age-appropriate behavior procedures.

11) Consistent treatment and expectations from everyone is vital.

12) Be aware that normal levels of auditory and visual input can be perceived by the student as too much or too little. For example, the hum of florescent lighting is extremely distracting for some people with autism. Consider environmental changes such as removing "visual clutter" from the room or seating changes if the student seems distracted or upset by his classroom environment.

13) If your high-functioning student with autism uses repetitive verbal arguments and/or repetitive verbal questions, you need to interrupt what can become a continuing, repetitive litany. The subject of the argument or question is not always the subject which has upset him. More often the individual is communicating a feeling of loss of control or uncertainty about someone or something in the environment. Try requesting that he write down the question or argumentative statement. Then write down your reply. This usually begins to calm him down and stops the repetitive activity. If that doesn't work, write down his repetitive question or argument and ask him to write down a logical reply (perhaps one he think you would make). This distracts from the escalating verbal aspect of the situation and may give him a more socially acceptable way of expressing frustration or anxiety.

Another alternative is role-playing the repetitive argument or question, with you taking his part, and having him answer you as he thinks you might.

14) Since these individuals experience various communication difficulties, do not rely on students with autism to relay important messages to their parents about school events, assignments, school rules, etc., unless you try it on an experimental basis with follow-up or unless you are already certain that the student has mastered this skill. Even sending home a note for his parents may not work. The student may not remember to deliver the note or may lose it before reaching home. Phone calls to parents work best until the skill can be developed. Frequent and accurate communication between the teacher and parent (or primary care-giver) is very important.

15) If your class involves pairing off or choosing partners, either draw numbers or use some other arbitrary means of pairing. Or ask an especially kind student if he or she would agree to choose the individual with autism as a partner before the pairing takes place. The student with autism is most often the individual left with no partner. This is unfortunate since these students could benefit most from having a partner.

16) Assume nothing when assessing skills. For example, the individual with autism may be a "math whiz" in Algebra, but not able to make simple change at a cash register. Or, he may have an incredible memory about books he has read, speeches he has heard or sports statistics, but still may not be able to remember to bring a pencil to class. Uneven skills development is a hallmark of autism.

Be Positive! Be Creative! Be Flexible!

http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/pages/Tips-for-Teaching-High-Functioning-People-with-Autism 1.12.2015

Useful tips:

At this website, you can find practical guidelines for setting up a classroom:

https://www.thewatsoninstitute.org/resource/quality-guidelines-checklist/

4.1. Social Cues Questionnaire

Social Cues Questionnaire by Carol Gray, can be very useful for teachers to find out how the students understands the school community.

The Morning Routine

1. What is the first thing you should do when you get to school in the morning?
_____

2. When you finish that, what´s next?
_____

3. How do you know when it is time to stop doing that?
_____

4. The hardest thing about starting the day at school is
_____

Rules

5. Are there rules for the children in your class?
_____

6. Are there rules up in the room? If so, where?
_____

7. What rules can you remember?
_____

8. Why do the children in your class have those rules?
_____

9. Which rule do you think is the best (or most important)?
_____

10. What rule do you think your class should have?
_____

11. One thing you should NEVER do in my class is
_____

12. Does your class have a rule about raising your hand? If so, when do children raise their hand? (Why?)
_____

13. If you raise your hand to answer your teacher´s question, will your teacher always call on you to give the answer
_____

My Teacher

My teacher´s name is _____

14. How do you know when the teacher is talking just to you?
_____

15. How do you know when your teacher is talking to all the children at the same time?
_____

16. How do you know if your teacher is happy? (What does your teacher do? What does your teacher say?)
_____

17. How do you know when your teacher is angry? (What does your teacher do? What does your teacher say?)
_____

18. What is one thing that makes your teacher angry?
_____

19. How do you know when your teacher is going to say something REALLY important? (What does your teacher do? What does your teacher say?)
_____

20. How do you know when your teacher is joking or teasing (trying to make others laugh)? (What does your teacher do? What does your teacher say?)
21. My teacher likes it when children...
_____

22. What does your teacher do when it is time for a lesson to begin?
_____

23. One thing my teacher does that I really like is ...
_____

Lines

24. When do all the children in your class walk in a line?
_____

25. Why do you think teachers ask children to walk in lines?
_____

26. How do you know when you should get in a line with the other children? (What does your teacher do? What does your teacher say?)
_____

27. What does it feel like to stand in a line??
_____

28. Do you like standing and walking in lines at school? (Why or why not?)
_____

29. Who gets to be the first in line?
_____

30. How do you know who gets to be the first in line?
_____

31. Would you like to be first in line, at the end of the line or somewhere in between?
_____

32. What should a child do if it is time to get in line and they are not finished with their work?
_____

33. Does your class ever line up outside?
_____

Recess

34. Tell me about recess.
_____

35. How do you know when it is time for recess?
_____

36. What do you like to do at recess?
_____

37. What are some things other children do at recess?
_____

38. What should you do if it is time for recess and you haven´t finished your work?
_____

39. Are there rules at recess? If so, what are some of the rules?
_____

40. What do you think is the best thing about recess?
_____

41. Is there anything about recess you don´t like? Can you tell me about it?
_____

42. What is the funniest thing you have ever seen at recess?
_____

43. How do you know when it is time to come in from recess?
_____

Getting help

44. How does your teacher know when you need help?
_____

45. If a child in your class needs help, what should they do?
_____

46. Everyone needs help sometimes. When do you think you need help?
_____

47. What things can you do to help children in your class?
_____

48. Which people in your class can help you if you need it?
_____

Transitions

49. What is the first thing you usually do after the morning recess?
_____

50. What is the first thing you usually do after lunch?
_____

51. What is the first thing you usually do after the afternoon recess?
_____

52. Where do children put papers that they finish?

_____

53. If a child in your class finished ALL of their work, what can they do?

_____

Friends and Classmates

54. What does the word friend mean?

_____

55. A friend is someone who ....

_____

56. Do you have a friend in your class? What is your friend´s name?

_____

57. What do people mean when they ask; Have you made any friends?

_____

58. Many of the children in my class like .... (Name of classmate)

_____

59. If I want to play with someone, here´s what I do............

_____

60. One thing I like to do with other children is ......

_____

61. Each child likes to do different things. Here is a list of ten things children like do do:

1.	2.
3.	4.
5.	6.
7.	8.
9.	10.

62. A "best friend" is ....

_____

From: Taming the Recess JuNgLe Socially simplifying recess for students with autism and related disorder. Carol Gray. (1994) Jenison Public Schools. MI. USA.

Chapter 5. Assessment and Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Assessment

Integral part of the Structured teaching is a good assessment because it is the basis on which we develop academic, functional, and independent goals and strategies. Assessment is a process of collecting information for the purpose of making important decisions about students. Teachers and other professionals must gather information from multiple sources using a variety of methods, including:

- Observations in a range of environments
- Standardized or norm-referenced tests,
- Intellectual testing,
- Informal and criterion-referenced tests,
- Rating scales and checklists,
- Structured interviews with parents, caregivers, regular education teachers, and others as appropriate,
- Developmental histories, diagnostic materials
- For early childhood students, teachers must observe the student in the natural learning environment with same-age peers.

Not all techniques must be used in all cases, but teachers should carefully consider what information is needed and select appropriate methods.

Formal assessments are usually standardized tests which are administered by a specialist who has been trained to use the assessment instruments. Informal assessment are usually given by teachers and parents and do not require special training. They use observation and do not require special materials.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Setting clear, measurable goals is essential for helping a child with autism make progress in and out of the classroom. The child's IEP consists of several goals for various areas of challenge for the child.

When deciding on goals, it's important that they meet these criteria:

- **Measurable:** The school district needs to document proof of the child's progress, so it's important that the goals are something they can measure.
- **Specific:** General goals are too hard to document, and it's easy for them to get overlooked. The best IEP goals are very specific.
- **Applicable:** The goals in the child's IEP must apply to your student, not to autistic in general.

Areas to consider addressing in the IEP for the student with an ASD

Social Skills/Social Difficulties
• Social Skills teaching methods
• Understanding social cues/emotions
• Appropriate social responding, initiation
• Teaching social routines
• Explicit teaching regarding social problem solving

Emotional and Self-Organizational Skills
• Increasing awareness of feelings/emotions
• Using appropriate strategies to deal with anxiety and problem situations

Communication and Language Skills
• Using augmentative communication if appropriate
• Increasing complexity of spoken/written communication
• Increasing serf-expression (and self-advocacy)
• Understanding social language (nonverbal cues, prosody, voice volume)
• Conversational and pragmatic skills (starting and stopping a conversation, responding to cues, learning figurative/nonliteral language)

Organizational Skills
• Visual, written organizers (schedules/lists/color codes)
• Working independently for longer periods
• Management of materials and tasks (including self-correction)
• Learning when to ask for help
• Keyboarding (as appropriate) and computer resources

Behavioral and Sensory Issues
• Address specific behavior problems or sensory issues
• Increase flexibility and ability to deal with transitions

Teaching self-care skills
• As with others skills, an explicit and focused approach is helpful.
• Try to use the child´s natural motivations as much as possible.
• Be explicit in teaching
• Use routines/scripts, which can then be faded.
• Teach generalization (different materials/situations/context for same behavior).
• Use the same methods used in schools.
   • Visual schedules
   • Written materials
   • Photographs
• Be consistent (gradually introduce variations)
• Use natural environments (rewards and consequences) as much as possible.

Social Goals

These social goals may be appropriate for your student with autism, depending on the child's age and functioning level. The following may prove helpful as a guide.

Early Childhood and Preschool
- The student will respond to his or her name by looking in the direction of the speaker on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will take turns with another child or the instructor for three turns one four out of five opportunities.
- The student will sustain an activity with a peer or teacher for five minutes or longer on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will allow a teacher to insert herself in the child's play by taking a turn or moving an object on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will meet the instructor's eye gaze when requested or to obtain a reward on four out of five opportunities.

Elementary School
- The student will respect another child's personal space on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will be able to describe the reason for three social behaviors, such as using appropriate table manners, saying "excuse me," saying "please," and others, on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will identify his or her own emotional state on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will sustain an activity with a peer or teacher for ten minutes or longer on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will give a verbal or non-verbal response to other individuals initiating an interaction The student will sustain an activity with a peer or teacher for five minutes or longer on four out of five opportunities.

Middle School and High School
- The student will be able to verbally relate how his actions or verbalizations affected other students on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will identify when another child is displaying an emotional state, such as happiness, sadness, anger, etc., on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will state how a social interaction should take place for three different interactions on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will not interrupt other speakers on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will identify how best to respond to another individual when that individual is expressing an emotion on four out of five opportunities.

Communication Goals

These communication goals may be appropriate for your student with autism, depending on the child's age and functioning level.

Early Childhood and Preschool

- The student will request more of a favorite play activity verbally or by using the hand gesture for "more" on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will request a desired item verbally or by pointing on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will greet the teacher verbally or with a gesture on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will use words or gestures appropriately to express dislike for an activity on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will follow a picture schedule of three steps on four out of five opportunities.

Elementary School

- The student will initiate communication with another child, such as asking a question, starting a game, or sharing a detail about his or her life, on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will ask three appropriate questions during a communicative interaction on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will take four back-and-forth turns in conversation with another individual on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will be able to describe the meaning of three non-verbal communication behaviors, such as turning away, frowning, smiling, crossing the arms, and raising the voice, on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will be able to relate five events that took place that day on four out of five opportunities.

Middle School and High School

- The student will be able to describe the meaning of eight non-verbal communication behaviors, such as turning away, frowning, smiling, crossing the arms, and raising the voice, one four out of five opportunities.
- The student will speak to peers about two or more different topics of conversation, changing the topic based on the peer's reaction, on four out of five opportunities.
- Using specific scenarios, the student will be able to identify where communication broke down and how to remedy the situation on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will ask for help from teachers and peers on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will be able to suggest three or more different ways to start a conversation or interaction with another individual on four out of five opportunities.

Behavior Goals

These behavior goals may be appropriate for your student with autism, depending on the child's age and functioning level.

Early Childhood and Preschoolers

- The student will deal with frustration or anger in an appropriate way, such as stomping his or her foot, offering a verbal expression, etc., on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will follow a one-step direction on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will accept a change in the normal daily routine 30% of the time.
- The student will sit during "circle time" and participate in classroom activities 50% of the time.
- Given prompts, the student will transition from one activity to another on four out of five opportunities.

Elementary School

- The student will learn and demonstrate simple self-calming techniques, such as deep breathing, on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will follow a three-step direction on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will accept a change in the normal daily routine 70% of the time.
- The student will participate in classroom activities 80% of the time.
- The student will follow the rules in the classroom 80% of the

Middle School and High School

- The student will identify when he or she needs to take a break and will independently request a break on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will follow five-step instructions and ask questions for clarification as needed on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will accept a change in the normal daily routine 80% of the time.
- The student will adhere to classroom rules 80% of the time.
- The student will behave appropriately outside the classroom (in hallways, the lunchroom, before and after school, etc) 80% of the time.

Self-Care, Sensory, and Fine Motor Goals

These self-care, sensory, and fine motor goals may be appropriate for your student with autism, depending on the child's age and functioning level.

Early Childhood and Preschool

- The student will be able to dress himself or herself, including putting on underwear, pants, a shirt, and socks, on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will be able to feed himself or herself at mealtime 80% of the time.
- The student will learn two alternative behaviors for a sensory-prompted behavior that is not socially appropriate, as measured on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will be able to hold a pencil appropriately on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will use the restroom as needed 80% of the time.

Elementary School
- The student will be able to put on his or her own outerwear, including hat, boots or shoes, coat, and mittens on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will be able to navigate six different types of closures, including zippers, ties, snaps, buttons, hook and loop, and buckles, on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will identify objects or situations that cause sensory discomfort and communicate that discomfort to an adult 80% of the time.
- The student will be able to write letters, numbers, and symbols with a pen or pencil on four out of five opportunities.
- The student will use the restroom as needed 100% of the time

Middle School and High School
- The student will be able to request a sensory break when needed 80% of the time.
- The student will be able to write legibly 80% of the time.
- The student will be able to follow a set schedule and navigate the school building 80% of the time.
- The student will be able to engage in purchasing interactions appropriately, including selecting something to buy and paying for it, 80% of the time.
- The student will be able to cook a simple meal for himself or herself on four out of five opportunities.

Sources:

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Volkmar FR, and Wiesner LA. 2009. A practical Guide to Autism. – What Every Parent, Family Member and Teacher Needs to Know. Hoboken New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Educational Evaluation Guide For Autism
http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/elg-autism-guide.pdf (December, 2015)

5. 1. Teacher Assistants / Paraprofessionals

Many students with autism who are integrated in mainstream classes, have teacher assistants or paraprofessionals, as they are often called. The paraprofessionals are sometimes hired to assist in the class in general, a small group of students or even one special student. Paraprofessionals are also a part of the team in special classes and special schools. Whether they are assigned to assist one student or to a special needs classroom, paraprofessionals can have great influence in the lives and function of their students. They can set the tone for the student's place in the school community.

It is likely that little training with respect to autism spectrum disorders has been given to prepare for this role. In some countries, paraprofessionals are given the opportunity to attend special education courses.

The role of a paraprofessional is different between countries, even between schools in the same area. Ideally, the role of the paraprofessional is directly related to the goals and objectives stated in the Individual Educational Plan (IEP), with specific strategies outlined to support these goals and objectives in the classroom.

It is a key factor that the student and the paraprofessional get on well together and whenever possible, the student decides which help he needs.

Here is an example of clarifying the role of the teacher and the paraprofessional:

	TEACHER ROLE	PARAPROFESSIONAL ROLE
Classroom Organization	Plans weekly schedule, lessons, room arrangements, learning centers, and activities for individual and the entire class.	Implements plan as specified by the teacher.
Assessment	Administers and scores formal and informal tests.	Administers informal tests.
Setting Objectives	Determines appropriate objectives for groups and individual children.	Carries out activities to meet objectives.
Teaching	Teaches lessons for the entire class, small groups, and individual children.	Reinforces and supervises practice of skills with individual and small groups.
Behavior Management	Observes behavior, plans and implements behavior management strategies for entire class and for individual children.	Observes behavior, carries put behavior management activities.
Working with Parents	Meets with parents and initiates conferences concerning child´s progress.	Participates in parent conferences when appropriate.
Building a Classroom Partnership	Arranges schedule for conferences, shares goals and philosophy with paraprofessional, organizes job duties for the paraprofessional.	Shares ideas and concerns during conferences and carries out duties as directed by a teacher.

From Special Education Paraprofessional Handbook,
(http://www.asec.net/archives/asecparahandbook8-03.pdf)

As paraprofessionals work as teacher assistants, time must be given for supervision and training. Paraprofessionals must be given basic information about:

- Autism
- Sensory issues
- Communication
- Social skills
- Behavior implications
- The teaching methods used
- Reinforcement
- Cooperation
- Taking data

It is important that the role and responsibility of the paraprofessional is written down. Ideally, a handbook for paraprofessional with all basic information is available.

Paraprofessionals in the UK were interviewed about what they felt were essential qualities they needed to be successful in their work. They responded with the following list:

- Interest in helping children
- Ability to work cooperatively
- Flexibility
- Communication skills
- Positive attitude
- Consistency
- Friendliness
- Patience
- Sensitivity

(Ionia parapro: https://www.gvsu.edu/cms3/assets/2CF6CA25-D6C6-F19E-339DC5CD2EB1B543/resources/ionia_parapro_manual2.pdf)

Independence is the end goal with every IEP goal intervention or skill program. We want our students to be independent grown ups and we need to start on this when they are young. There is always a risk when a student has a paraprofessional, that he relays too much on his assistance and becomes dependent. There is as well a risk that the paraprofessional is too willing to help. A paraprofessional has perhaps done his job best when the student can do things without assistance.

In her book, How to be a parapro, Diane Twachtman-Cullen has written:

The Ten Commandments of Paraprofessional Support
1. Thou shalt know well both your students and the disabilities they manifest.
2. Thou shalt learn to take your students' perspectives, and realize that they have significant difficulty taking yours.
3. Thou shalt always look beyond your student's behaviors to determine the functions that those behaviors serve.
4. Thou shalt be neither blinded by your students' strengths, nor hold them to standards they cannot meet.

5. Thou shalt master the art of rendering the appropriate degree of support for your students' level of skill development and behavior.
6. Thou shalt exercise vigilance in fading back prompts and promoting competence and independence in your students.
7. Thou shalt be proactive both in seeking out information to help your students, and in preparing and implementing the support that they need to be successful.
8. Thou shalt neither usurp the teachers' role, nor be albatrosses around their necks.
9. Thou shalt leave your egos at the school house door!
10. Thou shalt perform your duties mindfully, responsibly and respectfully at all times.

5.2. Take home messages

About autism
1. Autism is a disability with no known cause or cure.
2. Not all sensory behaviors are bad and simply telling a child to stop will not be helpful.
3. Some children have trouble processing what you say. They are not ignoring you. Give them time to process after you talk and avoid repeating the same thing over and over.
4. Never take away a child's communication system.
5. Practice will build conversation skills.

Your Role as a Classroom Paraprofessional
1. Your specific job responsibilities will change depending on which students you are working with.
2. You should follow the lead of the teacher.
3. Your job is very important.
4. If you are ever confused or unclear about your job requirements, ask your teacher!

Classroom Basics
1. Things in the classroom are setup for a reason.
2. Schedules should be used everyday and are not optional.
3. Each child has an IEP which is a legal document that needs to be followed.

Reinforcement
1. Everyone needs reinforcement.
2. Children with autism may need different kinds of reinforcement than other kids.
3. Give reinforcement for behaviors you want to see more of.
4. No reinforcement = no reason to work!

Dealing with Problem Behavior
1. All behavior happens for a reason.
2. Aggression can be a form of communication.
3. Aggression serves a purpose and if we can teach another behavior that serves that purpose - aggression will decrease.

4. Never give attention such as lectures, reprimands, or yelling to attention problem behaviors.
5. Never give time out to escape problem behaviors.
6. Planned ignoring does not mean we are letting the child "be bad." It is an effective behavioral intervention.

Taking Data
1. Part of the job of a paraprofessional is to take data.
2. Taking data is part of the IEP.
3. Don't be afraid to ask any questions about the goal program or data taking process.
4. Never make up data or summarize.

Fostering Independence
1. The goal is always independence.
2. We want our students to accomplish things without us.
3. The goal of community trips it to teach independence and students should be actively involved and participating in these trips.

Toolkit Useful Websites

TEACCH: www.teacch.com

Social Stories Carol Gray: http://www.carolgraysocialstories.com

Dr. Tony Attwood: http://www.tonyattwood.com.au
(A lot of information, esp. about High Function students with Autism)

Michelle Garcia Winner: www.socialthinking.com

Tasks Galore books: www.tasksgalore.com

www.do2learn.com. A lot of pictures, forms and more, which you can get and use in School, Home and Community

APPS:

iAutism: APPS for Autism: http://www.iautism.info/en/

www.friendshipcircle.org

The Cat kit: : www.cat-kit.com

Some practical ideas for Individual Educational Plans:

http://autism.lovetoknow.com/IEP_Goals_for_Autistic_Students

Use GOOGLE and YouTube! TEACCH Autism Program: https://www.youtube.com/TEACCH

YouTube links for Toolkit

TEACCH Autism Program: https://www.youtube.com/TEACCH TEACCH
Autism Program: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRNyvrrcRio

Sensory Overload: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2P4Ed6G3gw

Dr. Temple Grandin - The Woman who thinks like a Cow: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWBo886FuQo

Dr. Temple Grandin talks about Sensory Issues and Sensitivity:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzf80k5b_EM

Early Signs of Autism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtvP5A5OHpU

Structured Classroom: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXzs1qe03c8&list=PLoLwGC18aDwxUifZyRAC96jbOu0xfivaf

How to Use A Visual Schedule: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jr56lhhZ4Os

Work System: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLoC6G3Vf74&list=PLK8ph1-RqiheY8TcNRzQM0H76C-Nluu-b&index=1

ShoeboxTasks: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFUn-9IvgEs

Adult Life Skills Program (ALSP) for People with Autism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QC0Tdlug_4o

Me and my Autism: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ

5 Things Teachers Should Know: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txx8G6_FsaU

Carol Gray on YouTube explaining Social Stories:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjlIYYbVIrI

MASPA - Măsuri pentru promovarea non discriminării și incluziunii sociale în mediul școlar, comunitate și pe piața muncii pentru persoanele cu autism, cu focus pe comunitățile de roma