



From the President

Welcome to this combined edition of the Autism Tasmania Newsletter and Bulletin. I hope you find the choice of articles included both interesting and thought provoking. I know that of particular interest to many families, schools and support services is the release of the Atelier report, a review of services for students with special and or additional educational needs, adopted in full by the Minister for Education, the Hon. Paula Wriedt, MHA. We will follow the implementation of the report closely and particularly its implications for students with autism in mainstream schools. Rosemary Rush has prepared some notes about the report for the journal and a summary of the recommendations.

We are breaking with tradition this year and our Annual General Meeting, to be held on Wednesday 22nd September commencing at 7.30pm. We will be using the Telehealth facilities at major hospitals in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. While many people generally avoid AGM's, we encourage you to attend to show your support for the organisation. More information about the AGM and how to find the Telehealth facilities is included in this bulletin. All financial members are able to stand for committee positions. Please consider applying if you think you have skills that may be of benefit to Autism Tasmania.

The cost of membership to Autism Tasmania has remained at the same amount since the formation of Autism Tasmania in 1992. On the agenda at the AGM will be a motion to increase membership to \$25.00 per year (\$15.00 concession) plus GST. Also proposed is the implementation of an annual levy of \$5 per membership, as a contribution towards the employment of the Family Support Coordinator (FSC). After much discussion at committee level we

reluctantly recognise that these small increases are essential for the continued operation of our organisation.

Autism Tasmania has always run on a shoestring budget, receiving no government funding to operate. The committee is voluntary with committee members giving their time and using personal resources at their own expense eg, phone and email. As I write this at home, it is a beautiful Sunday afternoon outside!

There is no doubt that the prevalence of autism in our community is on the increase and if we are to meet the need for support

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we must grow as an organisation. We continue to apply for various grants to operate, although it is easier to access funds for bricks, mortar or material objects than it is to fund staff. We have just been allocated an ex government computer which will be placed in our library/office at Giant Steps and also been awarded a \$4,000.00 grant through the Tasmanian Community Foundation to further establish this facility.

However the demand for support from the FSC has far exceeded our expectations with support being sought from throughout the state. The FSC is still an evolving position as we determine how to best meet the needs of members requiring assistance. Our major challenge over the next few months is accessing funds to fund this position on an ongoing basis. We are currently preparing a submission to go to the Minister for Health and if you have accessed support from Autism Tasmania or you value the information we put out in our journals and bulletins we urge you to write to the Minister seeking support from him for Autism Tasmania. You can write to The Hon David Llewellyn, MHA,

Minister for Health, C/- Parliament House, Hobart.

At present, the Minister believes there are only a small number of people with autism in the state requiring assistance (138 in fact) – we need to dispel this myth. Based on data collated by the Autism Council of Australia's professional committee, headed by Dr Verity Botroff, regarding the prevalence and incidence of autism and population figures in Tasmania we estimate that this figure is closer to 3,000!

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM, please feel free to come and see how our meetings are held. Nominations for committee positions are obtained prior to the meeting, so you may attend without feeling that you will "roped in" to a position. Should you require further information about any of the issues raised in this article please write c/- of the Autism Tasmania postal address or contact me on 6343 2308 or email to rosnmark@iprimus.com.au.

Ros Ward President

Autism Tasmania and the Atelier Review comments by Rosemary Rush

Notes about the Report. For more information and questions & answers - <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/essentiallearningsforall/default.htm>

Background: Towards the end of 2003, Associate Professor Bob Conway completed a report on the review of the Tasmanian Education Department's Behaviour Support Team. The report raised some issues which had implications for service provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs. Following this report, the Minister for Education, Hon Paula Wriedt MHA, announced an independent and extended Review of Services for Students with Special and/or Additional Educational Needs in December 2003. Atelier Solutions performed the review and their report is called Essential Learnings For All. During the process Atelier personnel met with upwards of 700 stakeholders and performed 12 comprehensive case studies, 2 per district. Additionally, over 80 submissions were received via email and mail.

The Report: In presenting the Report, Atelier commended the direction of the State's Education System and noted that educational communities

around the world were looking to Tasmania; following the process of school transformation with great interest. The reason we can move ahead, they say, is because of the strong values base at the heart of the new curriculum which is called *Essential Learnings, ELs*. The relevance of this values base is a recurring theme in the Report. The Minister has accepted the Report in its entirety and in so doing placed inclusion at the helm of State Schooling in Tasmania. All the recommendations are to be implemented. The policy framework wrapped around this transformation involves *Supportive School Communities Framework, 2003 - 2007; Essential Learnings Framework, 2002; Learning Together, 2001; Policy on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Regular Schools, 1994*.

"The department has set in place a values base that no longer perceives students with special and/or additional educational needs as having a deficit or a problem. It is now time for practice systemically and at the school level to match the values base. The *Essential Learnings Framework* provides the core opportunity for values and practice to be aligned so that students with special

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and/or additional educational needs are truly included.”

Some fundamental observations that the Review reported were:

1. the need for cultural change
2. that it is time to extend the values base in the ELs.

Some of the key issues noted were;

1. the disconnect between policy and practice regarding inclusion
2. the internal disconnect between support services from district to district
3. the system responds to student deficit rather than learning development etc.

more from the Report:

see recommendations listed at end of this article

The provision of services to students with additional needs “can only be improved by deeply embedding them in mainstream provision.” At present outcomes of students on alternate programs cannot be measured. The *Essential Learnings* is for all students so student outcomes must be understood and reported on.

“Presently, too many students with special and/or additional educational needs do not have full access to the school transformations and curriculum innovations driving Tasmanian public schooling. As a key component of the values base of public education in Tasmania, the *Essential Learnings* must be for all students.”

“The Review believes that identifying high needs students and having their names on a central register is appropriate and necessary, both now and for the future. The register provides the key reference point against which the system can understand its level of success in meeting the needs of these students. The Review believes, however, that these students should not be labelled as Category A students.”

“Overwhelmingly, departmental officers and parents talk about Category A, Category B and teacher aide time. They rarely mention programs or outcomes. The label, individually attached and reported in teacher aide hours, has become everything. This is a long way from the intent of the register concept.”

How can the process of resourcing guarantee the inclusion of students in the school transformations and curriculum?

The Review reported that with the implementation

of recent policy framework from the *ELs and Supportive School Communities*, the current funding allocation model is no longer effective in delivering appropriate and efficient services for students with special and/or additional educational needs.

“What is now needed is provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs through mainstream resource allocation, with appropriate differentiation to ensure equity of access, participation and achievement.”

Other notes made were that there would be clear role statements for Support Staff and a new position of Assistant Teacher would be created, requiring formal qualifications and specific industrial arrangements.

A plan for the implementation of the recommendations is due in October 2004 with implementation commencing in 2005.+

The Review recommends that:

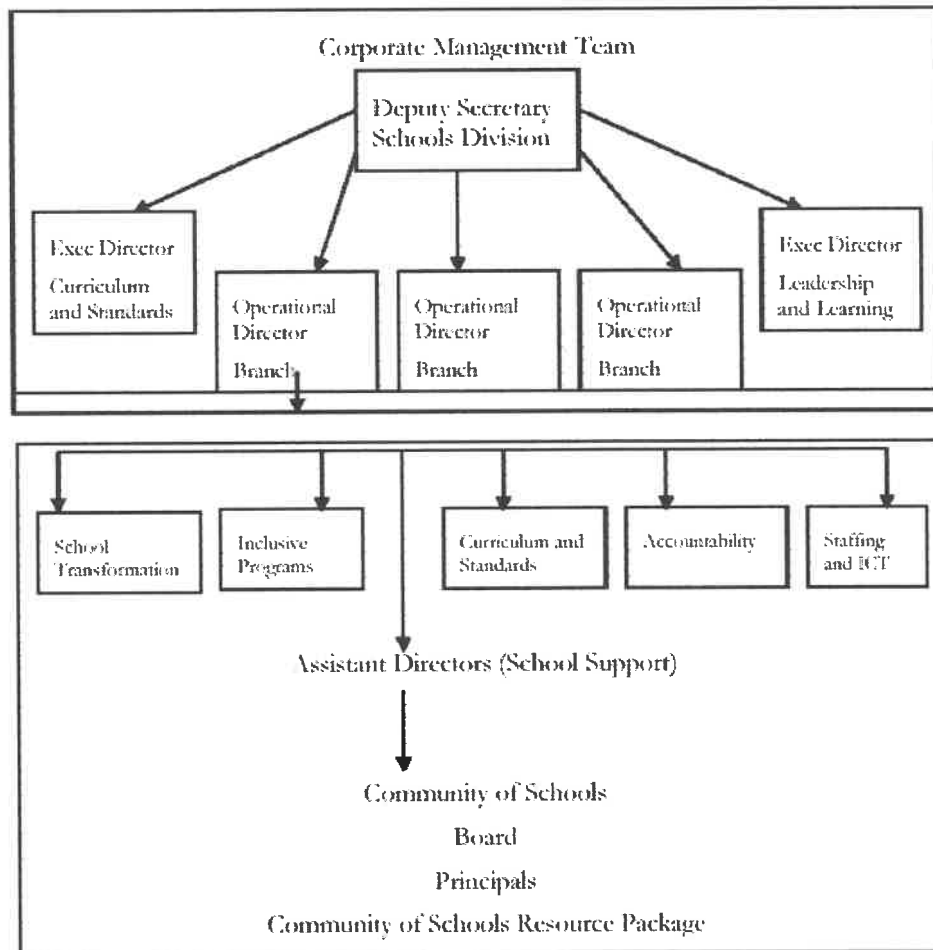
1. the department initiate a process of dialogue in communities of schools through which all stakeholders can gain the deepest possible understandings of the values base of Tasmanian public education, the inclusive policies that arise from it and the best practices in the implementation of policy for all students, including those with special and/or additional educational needs.
2. across the department and in its schools, there be established a culture of, approaches to and practices in service provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs that is strongly focused on developing learning capacity rather than responding to deficits.
3. the present nomenclature around categories of students no longer be used, although a central register of students with high needs continue to be held.
4. once students are deemed eligible for inclusion on the central high needs register, the resource be provided to the communities of schools who, through their boards, determine allocation to inclusive approaches according to the perceived functional and educational needs of students.
5. Districts and District Support Services be replaced by a new organisational branch structure that will align service provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs with mainstream provision and will enable the closest possible alignment between the department’s core operations.

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6. services for all students, including those with special and/or additional educational needs, be provided as closely as possible to schools by formally establishing supportive communities of schools, led by a Board of Principals.
7. services for students with special and/or additional educational needs be structured so that they are part of mainstream provision and are clearly linked to the school transformation process based on the *Essential Learnings Framework*.
8. the department develop a funding model, based on consistent systemic criteria, that will provide to communities of schools a differential resource package to enable the implementation of approaches and programs for students with special and/or additional educational needs.
9. all external school support staff, other than those associated with low incidence conditions, as a general rule be located in communities of schools and be accountable to the Board of Principals.

10. the Department develop clear role statements for all external school support staff to reflect their responsibilities and accountabilities in the new organisational structure.
11. the Department clarify the distinctions between flexible and alternative provision so that all approaches for students with special and/or additional educational needs are implemented under the auspices of a school as part of the implementation of a broadened, flexible and authentic school curriculum.
12. Communities of schools be provided with resources to support particular schools in which a critical mass of high needs students is enrolled, so that best practices in inclusion are implemented, researched and promulgated.
13. the Department establish a new para-professional position of Assistant Teacher, requiring formal qualifications and specific industrial arrangements, so that there is increased capacity in schools to provide learning programs for students with special and/or additional educational needs.



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14.the Department orient accountability processes across the system and its schools to measuring and reporting the full range of outcomes for students with special and/or additional educational needs, including curriculum, social and equity outcomes.

15.the school improvement review process incorporate an explicit focus on inclusion so that schools can report on the improvements they have made to guarantee the access, participation and achievements of students with special and/or additional educational needs

16.the Department liaise with the University of Tasmania to ensure that the teacher education program addresses policy and practice in relation to the inclusion of students with special and/or additional educational needs.

Accountability “The Review could find little in current systemic approaches to accountability whereby departmental officers at any level could account for the outcomes arising from educational

programs for students with special and/or additional educational needs.”

“Furthermore, the relatively low priority that is given to accountability around students with special and/or additional educational needs is indicated by the extent to which even available data are not utilised.”

The diagram shown is a representation of the linkages between the schools division corporate management team, the operational branches and the communities of schools. Colleges are not included in this system. The line of accountability becomes clear. It was stated at the presentation of the Report that the installation of the three Operational Branches was NOT a return to the three regions structure of the 1980's. There may be 4 – 6 schools that make up a Community of Schools.

Rosemary Rush – President

Autism Behavioural Intervention Tasmania Inc

Autism Tasmania Inc - Committee

August 2004

An Audience with Autism – A National A4 event

Picture the scene, hundreds of white chairs lined up on the grounds of Parliament House, Canberra.

A photo attached to each chair, a photo of someone with ASD.

Hundreds of people represented by white chairs, the chairs themselves representing the sitting of parliament and the silent pleas of acceptance and understanding.

On Thursday 30 September, A4 will be staging an awareness event, 'An Audience with Autism' to coincide with the Biennial Autism Conference in Canberra.

We will be walking to Parliament house with invited Parliamentarians and the Autism community.

We will walk to where the sea of white chairs will be set up to represent those of us that can't be there on the day

Even if you can't make it to Canberra, you can still be represented.

To help with the cost of the chairs, you are asked to sponsor a chair for your loved one with ASD/Aspergers for \$10. Their name, diagnosis, age,

state/suburb and photo (optional) will be placed on the chair for the politicians and the world to see. Families, friends, relatives, teachers ANYONE can send a picture on behalf of someone with ASD/Aspergers to be placed on a chair.

Having hundreds of chairs lined up in front of Parliament House will raise the profile of Autism and give you a chance to be there in spirit.

We also need volunteers to:

- Give your elected politician an invitation to join the event.
- Get a group together in your local area to be there with us on the day.

For more details of what to do to join this fantastic Autism Awareness please visit www.a4.org.au/awarenessevent. Or contact awarenessevent@a4.org.au or write to An Audience with Autism - attn: Kelley Harris PO BOX 524 Traralgon 3844 for more details.

Japan, an Asperger Refuge by Geraldine Robertson

In January this year, I had the opportunity to work in Ikeda, Osaka for 12 weeks. Apart from the obvious benefits of seeing another country, I was interested in testing the statement that having Aspergers is like visiting another country and not knowing the language and customs. I found out that this has no relationship to the experience of having Aspergers.

Japan is very AS friendly, even though it is crowded, noisy and has many sensory challenges. They have strong common threads across systems, so although I worked in 12 schools from Kindergarten to Junior High, there were so many common organization structures, that it was fine. Similarly, railway and airport systems around the country were relatively consistent. The first experience was always scary, but I knew that the next would be familiar.

I spoke and read no Japanese, so bank transactions etc were a potential minefield. Their procedures were quite different from ours, but turned out to match ticketing systems as well, so it was easy to generalize automated financial transaction procedures. People with Aspergers are often very good at spotting patterns, so I was quite happy with their logical organization.

The thing that really surprised me was the tolerance for people who tramp heavily over social customs. I was really nervous about this, because although I tried to study etiquette before I went, it was far too complicated. This is where I noticed the difference between being a tourist and having AS. Because I looked different, difficulties with social functioning was understood and supported. People did not expect me to get it right. I had to attend a very important social function, and although I was rehearsed, I simply could not bow correctly. Two young women saw that I was becoming embarrassed and mimed that they would stand on each side of me and poke me when it was time to bow. I was able to watch and match my bow to theirs. After the ceremony, lots of people came to congratulate me for getting it right. It was really significant to be

congratulated for a tiny effort, rather than be criticized for not being able to do it independently.

I think that there is a big lesson here. Often children and adults with AS reap an enormous amount of criticism for failure. People decide the things that we "ought" to know and frequently criticize failure. In Japan I rarely felt a failure because even small successes were received with appreciation and effort was encouraged.

Another support to living was the wonderful shell of privacy that Japanese people can produce at will. I laughed when Japanese people commented on my very Japanese manner on trains. I did try to travel at off peak times, but when I was in crowded situations, the courtesy of not looking at each other was appreciated.

I met two Western men who have Aspergers. They have decided to live in Japan, where they can earn a decent living working as part time English teachers (the only qualification is a 4 year diploma or degree in any subject area). They enjoy being treated with respect, and differences are attributed to being foreign and not being inept. They enjoyed being respected for their ability to work hard rather than being criticized for limitations in workplace socializing. I think the best part for them is that their wives also consider unusual behaviours as foreign and not aberrant.

While I was traveling, I often found myself close to meltdown, but soon realized that I was never far from a garden or shrine. These lovely places provide tranquility to reflect and calm. Even schools have pools and soothing garden areas where I could go to gather my personal resources. This is not considered odd as aesthetic appreciation is a part of life. Even though I was constantly out of my comfort zone, I had a wonderful time and was able to cope well with all the changes. I suggest that a foreign country with a very structured culture might be a very good option for autistic adults who experience difficulty in their native countries.

Bed Time Battles reprinted from Autism Ass of WA Sep 2003

Some people find going to bed easy, for some families this becomes a struggle. There are a number of things that we can do to maximise the "likelihood of the child going to bed and sleeping.

Include bed on their daily timetable

This helps to prepare the individual for bedtime, because, as they go through the other activities of the afternoon and evening, they can see that bedtime is getting closer. In addition, as we have mentioned in the past, some children are quite willing to do something the timetable 'tells' them to do, even when they might argue with a person telling them to do the same thing.

Have a bedtime routine

Ensure that you go through the same steps every night, so that the person learns going to bed as a routine and it becomes automatic. This may include steps to help the person make the transition from being up and about to going to bed. For example, many children may have a quiet drink and read a book before bed. Some may play with a special toy. This step also helps to signal to the person that bed time is coming. To help people to complete the going to bed routine, provide a visual reminder of this sequence.

Allow "cooling off" time

As we know, children's play can be extremely active, involving lots of running, jumping screaming etc. It is not physiologically possible for most people to go directly from such high levels of physical activity to being able to quietly lie down and fall asleep. Thus, if we want children to be able to go to bed and stay there, we need to create a transition in activity levels. That is, we need to provide them with activities that allow them to calm down gradually before they are expected to go to bed.

Exercise

Building some physical exercise into the daily timetable can be very beneficial. This has the dual effects of using up excess energy and of relieving tension and producing a calming effect.

We are not suggesting a strictly regimented workout, but simply trying to ensure that there is an opportunity each day for the child to be engaged in some physical activity that they enjoy. In most

cases, parents will not need to provide anything extra, as most children will spontaneously take care of this need. However, for some children there is a need to structure some physical activity into their day. (As mentioned, do not schedule exercise directly before bedtime).

Don't create unnecessary problems

For example, demanding that a child who is simply not the least bit tired go to bed and sleep, is likely to bring on a battle. Quite often, simply allowing a child who is not sleepy at 7:30 to stay up until 8:30, when they are tired, is sufficient to solve the problem. Alternatively, allowing them to do some quiet activity until they are tired may work for the child.

Make sure that bed has pleasant associations for them

Obviously people are more likely to spend time in a place they enjoy than in a place they dislike. If the child has unhappy associations with bed, he will find it difficult to relax and go to sleep there.

There is no one "right way"

Different families and different cultures have many different solutions to bedtime. There is no universal law that says that children have to be tucked away in their own room at a certain hour. The right solution is the one that has both the child and the rest of the family getting enough rest and that produces a minimum of stress and conflict for the whole family.

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First printed in September 2003

Behaviour Management Strategies by Laura Addabbo

INFORMATION SHEET

Taken from Autism News, June 2004, pages 9-10. Laura Addabbo, Psychologist and Support Worker with Autism Victoria has written this item.

It would come as no surprise to many that the most frequently asked questions of our staff relate to understanding the behaviour of children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Laura has prepared this article to help you understand your "ABC".

The behavioural challenges that are present when caring for a person with an Autism Spectrum Disorder can often feel overwhelming. Most people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder present with a variety of behaviours that can seem odd or extreme, however it is extremely important that you have an understanding of where these behaviours are coming from. To change a person's behaviour you need to be able to make sense of that behaviour – making sense of that behaviour means making sense of the autism spectrum disorder. You don't have to be a behavioural expert to manage problematic behaviours – you just need the basic strategies, some determination, a good understanding and a lot of patience! It is also a good idea to make a list of problematic behaviours and prioritise one or two that will be addressed first. Trying to work on more than one or two things will result in spreading yourself too thin and decrease your ability to be 100% consistent across the target behaviours.

1. The first step in tackling a problematic behaviour is to figure out what is causing that behaviour. In behaviourist terms this is referred to as the "antecedent". It is also important to look at what the consequences of the behaviour are, ie what happens immediately after the behaviour. Often the consequences are the reason why the behaviour continues to occur. A simple way to determine these patterns is to use an "ABC Chart"

Keeping a record over a period of days or weeks should identify a pattern to the events that are causing the behaviour to occur. Once you are

aware of the potential triggers of an undesirable behaviour you can take steps to either avoid those triggers or slowly desensitise the person to those things. Similarly, if you have identified consequences that are inadvertently rewarding the person then you can make a determined effort to change these consequences.

Antecedent ? Behaviour ? Consequence

(see table below)

2. The next step is to determine the function the behaviour is serving for the person. Behaviours displayed by persons with an Autism Spectrum Disorder always serve a purpose, the trick is finding out what that purpose is. Here is a list of common reasons for behaviours:

Communication – *I'm tired, I'm confused, I don't like this, help!*

Attention or other positive reinforcement

Reduction of frustration or stress

Escape from demands

Lack of understanding

Sensory stimulation

Loss of control

3. Once you know what purpose the behaviour is fulfilling you can set about trying to find a more appropriate alternative. For example, if an undesirable behaviour is providing sensory stimulation then an alternative behaviour can be selected which will provide the same input for the child but be more appropriate.

4. By breaking the alternative behaviour down into simple steps, and using visual aids as a teaching tool, you can teach the person to engage in the alternative behaviour instead of the inappropriate behaviour.

5. By using a reward system, which incorporates a highly desired item, the child will be

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Date/Time	What happened before the behaviour began	Describe the behaviour	What did you do in response to the behaviour	What happened then

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more motivated to learn the new skill and use it when necessary. Reward should occur when the person has attempted to use the alternative, has been successful in using the alternative and in the absence of the inappropriate behaviour.

How does this work? A common example would be the child who bites his hand when in the supermarket:

You have assessed that supermarkets make him anxious, due to the overwhelming sensory input (antecedent). Once the hand biting (behaviour) begins you usually get out of the supermarket as quickly as you can (consequence). The consequence (you leaving the supermarket in a hurry) is actually reinforcing the hand biting behaviour because the child has learnt that if he bites his hand you will take him away from the offending environment. So, following the above suggestions:

The hand biting is possibly achieving two functions - a reduction in stress levels and oral stimulation (functions of the behaviour). So you may decide to teach the child a more acceptable form of relaxation, such as deep breathing, rubbing his hands, or thinking of a favourite object/activity. You could also teach him to bite on a more appropriate object (soft toy, teething ring, piece of fabric) instead of his hand (appropriate alternative). You can use role-play, photos, and other visual methods to teach the child the new relaxation method and to bite the object instead of his hand.

This teaching should be carried out during calm times, not when the child is feeling anxious. Eventually the child should become familiar with the new methods and when to use them. Once this has occurred you can begin to use the strategies in actual situations. Initially you may need to observe the child closely for any signs of anxiety. Implement the relaxation and have the object ready to pre-empt the hand being bitten. You should reward the child when he has tried to comply with this technique. As the child becomes independent in this technique you can move the responsibility for relaxation and carrying the biting object onto the child (by using a carry pouch or an object which easily fits in his pocket).

In addition to finding an alternative to hand biting, you should also look for ways to desensitise the child to the antecedent (in this case the sensory issues). You could start by only taking the child to the supermarket when you have one or two items to buy, so you know you will only be there for a short time. If there are auditory sensitivities you can use earplugs or headphones to reduce these.

If there are visual sensitivities then the child can wear a cap to dim the brightness of fluorescent lights and reduce the amount of visual input. If there are sensitivities to smell then try to avoid the toiletries and pet food isles. If the child copes well with these periods then there should be a reward as soon as you get back to the car. This could be a favourite book or toy, or a trip to McDonald's on the way home! You could also use a social story to explain to the child what might happen during the trip to the supermarket, as well as what the reward will be once the trip is complete.

Any behavioural strategy must be implemented consistently each time the behaviour occurs, and must be used by each individual that has contact with the child. It is also important to be patient as this process may take several days, weeks or even months before results are apparent. Here are some other useful strategies to incorporate into parenting and teaching styles:

Helpful hints

Provide a predictable environment and routine

Prepare the child for changes in advance

Where possible introduce changes gradually and with visual information

Use visuals to aid comprehension

Make instructions brief and concrete

Incidental teaching → use everyday situations to teach appropriate behaviour

Encourage and praise appropriate behaviour, pairing this praise with an immediate reward if necessary

Use obsessions/preferred activities as rewards if more acceptable rewards fail to motivate

Differentiate between 'odd' behaviours and those that interrupt learning

Be consistent and persistent

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Apology

Autism Tasmania acknowledges Autism Victoria as the source of the article, Interventions in Autism by Professor Pat Howlin which was reproduced in AT's June 2004 issue and apologises for the accidental omission of the attribution.

An Overview of the TEACCH* Approach

*Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children) by Polly A. Yarnall, M. Ed

TEACCH is a principle-based program which emphasizes (1) autism as an organic disability; (2) parent-professional collaboration; (3) the generalist model, seeing the whole child in the context of the family rather than through narrowly-defined specific disciplines, such as behavioral issues, speech deficits, etc; and (4) individualization.

The TEACCH generalist model avoids too much concentration on any single aspect of the child or the problem. TEACCH staff are trained as generalists, prepared to address all aspects of the problems of autism, their roles not determined by professional disciplines which focus on discrete features of the child or the disability.

Recognizing that autistic children learn differently from other children, classroom teaching strategies rely on Structured Teaching, an approach that brings a high degree of visual organization to the perceptually disorganized world of the autistic child. Classrooms are organized with clear physical and visual boundaries which define areas for specific activity, thereby supplying context to the environment. Such organization also minimises visual and auditory distractions, allowing the child to develop concept instead of focusing on details. Classrooms for the younger student typically include a snack area, play area, transition area and one-to-one teaching area, as well as individual stations for independent work.

Individualized visual schedules tell each child on a daily basis what activities are going to occur, the sequence in which they will occur, and when preferred activities will take place. By adjusting them to the level of the child's understanding, schedules may be comprised initially of concrete objects, transitioning later to photographs, line drawings, combination word/pictures, or merely words. Such visual schedules bring not only structure to the child's day, but also the reminder and welcoming reassurance of what is going to take place. Moreover, visual schedules allow the child to begin anticipating what is coming, thus allowing him to learn to initiate the next activity and setting him on the road to independent functioning.

One-to-one instructional areas in TEACCH-based classrooms allow each child to receive individualized attention to address new learning. Here is where the child learns concepts and strategies for approaching and carrying out learning activities that lead to independent functioning. All initial learning takes place in one-to-one instruction, moving to independent work only after the child has demonstrated sufficient mastery of a systematized approach to his work. The ultimate goal of TEACCH is the independent application of the concept or skill.

Typically, the work system that moves the child to independent function addresses four basic questions: (1) How much work is to be done? (2) What work is to be done? (3) What is the Concept of Finished? and (4) What Happens Next—after the work is finished? The predictability and invariance of that process is not only reassuring to the child, but comforting as well. Following such an organizational strategy also introduces a concept that can grow with and be used by the child throughout his school career and into his adult life. "Work" in the TEACCH context includes academics, speech/communication, play skills, social development, functional skills for daily living activities, as well as work skills that translate into post-school environments.

That autistic students in TEACCH-based programs move so quickly to independent function and *typically* show a natural reduction in frequency of behavior incidents is due, in part, to its emphasis on visual instruction and support. Discrete learning tasks are designed so that the child can quickly and visually comprehend what is required. This visual clarity and organization specifically address the autistic learning differences and anticipate total mastery, not a per-centage of achievement

The TEACCH approach attempts to understand and accommodate to the manifest individual needs and differences of the autistic child rather than insisting on a sameness of approach. This is demonstrated in its use of on-going assessment. Programming in TEACCH-based classrooms begins with sound assessment which tells what to teach, what level to teach on, and how to

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teach thus providing each child with a highly individualized curriculum specific to his own unique needs. In addition to the use of the Psycho Educational Profile (PEP-R), informal evaluations and observations may occur on a daily basis, enabling teaching staff to make adjustments to the child's curriculum and to determine what visual or organizational supports may need to be added in order for the child to develop his emerging skills. Questions such as "What is the child able to do now? What does he show interest in? What does he seem to have some understanding of. even if he can't fully execute it?" help to define those areas where the child is ready to benefit from more concentrated teaching. This developmental approach builds on existing foundations, emphasizing the child's strengths rather than his deficits

The development of communicative and social skills are intended to be primary targets in TEACCH-based classrooms. Using data-based assessment protocols, staff evaluate the child's natural communication in all its forms. TEACCH distinguishes between directed and non-directed communication between talking (which may not be communicative) and communicating (which can exist in many forms that may not include talking), and between elicited and non-elicited communication. To build a meaningful communication system for each child, it is critical to know how that child communicates, the context in which he- naturally communicates, and the function and content of that communication. TEACCH emphasizes the importance of the child's being able to communicate spontaneously. without prompts or dependence on someone else to elicit the communication.

Social skills development is threaded throughout the class day. Structured play activities, opportunities for turn-taking, programmed typical peer interactions, and development of play skills that open the door to integrated interaction all figure in the development of the child's curriculum

The final determination of each child's curriculum in TEACCH-based programs also includes (1) developmental appropriateness, (2) functionality, (3) level of independence, and (4) parental priorities and practice

Even as individual learning tasks present a clear structure from beginning to end, as visual schedules structure the sequence of the day's activities, as the physical arrangement of the

classroom structures the use of space, so the progression from one-to-one instructional settings to independent work areas within the classroom to opportunities to practice and further evolve skills beyond the classroom environment (i.e., to generalize the application of the skill in multiple environments), to community-based training and application, TEACCH concepts move each child developmentally and hierarchically to functional competence and meaningful, satisfying participation in the world around him or her

In order to accomplish that progression, teaching staff in TEACCH classrooms typically bring significant teaching experience to the initial 40 hours of intensive, hands-on training that introduces them to the TEACCH concepts of visual teaching, organization, and structure, as well as steeping them in the culture of autism and helping them to understand autistic differences. That training also emphasizes the primary importance of working collaboratively with the families of the children, enlisting and utilizing their input as each child's program is developed and implemented TEACCH recognizes that the family is the agent of generalization for the autistic child, and that their role is central to the child's success. TEACCH-based classrooms are encouraged to utilize on-going consultancy to insure the integrity of the model, and all staff are encouraged to maintain currency in TEACCH through that consultancy and through regularly-scheduled professional inservices*

**(The highly successful TEACCH programs in North Carolina are supported by regional TEACCH centers throughout the state. These centers provide consultant support for both the classrooms and the families, utilizing a Psychoeducational Therapist, a funded position unique to North Carolina. These consultants are available to address multiple issues concerning children with autism, their classrooms, and their families. It is, however, an individual school district's choice to be affiliated with TEACCH Not all districts serving autistic students in the state may have that affiliation.)*

THIS MONOGRAPH ADDRESSES QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF THE TEACCH APPROACH ENCOUNTERED BY THIS CONSULTANT IN THE COURSE OF HER WORK. THERE IS NO INTENT TO REPRESENT IT AS AN OFFICIALLY ENDORSED DESCRIPTION OF TEACCH This handout courtesy of Polly A. Yarnall, M Ed. Autism Consultancy Services 1154 NE Sturgess Avenue; Hillsboro, Oregon 97124 e-mail: payarnall@juno.com

The Student with Autism - Understanding some common difficulties reprinted from Autism Ass of WA "Autism News" April 2004

A child's behaviour can be poor and/or deteriorate for a variety of reasons. Sometimes the cause of deterioration is not apparent and the situation can be distressing and perplexing for all concerned.

With an understanding of autism, however, it becomes easier to find the source of the problem and to take preventative action.

This article is meant to be used as a guide to developing preventative strategies to minimise the risk of poor behaviour.

Some of the commonest causes of poor behaviour have their source in the following:

A disturbed routine:

Children with autism are extremely attached to routines. These routines can involve doing things in a certain way, or a specific order. It can mean only taking a single route to school or other familiar places. Or it can mean the child wanting to maintain a familiar environment without change.

Many researchers hold the view that this insistence on routines is a strategies the child employs to cope with a social world he/she finds overwhelming. It is as if the child makes the world manageable by reducing it, and imposing an order which makes the environment predictable and less confusing.

If a child's behaviour deteriorates for no apparent reason, it is always useful to look at the environment to check if the child's anticipated way of doing things has changed e.g. is there a new teacher in the class? Has the child been placed at a different desk? Is a different teaching approach being used? Has there been a change to the timetable?

Strategies

Always prepare the child for change. Introduce visual timetables based on the child's skill level, using pictures/compic/written instructions. A timetable will tell the student, in a way he can easily understand, which activities will occur and in what sequence. The timetable can also include a picture of the teacher, thus accommodating staff changes.

Train the child to reference the timetable in order to make referencing the timetable the primary routine.

Consequently, should an event in the day need to change, alter the timetable. In this way, because the primary routine has become one of following the timetable, the child will be less likely to become upset by change.

There are occasions, even with a structured timetable, a child will exhibit distress. In these situations, check if some less obvious environmental change has occurred.

While it is important to encourage toleration of change, it is important also to understand the way in which routines help the child to cope with an environment he/she finds overwhelming.

If the person's routines are not preventing learning, and not harming self, or others, do not actively focus on disrupting the routines. Instead concentrate on developing the person's skills in functional, academic and social areas.

With programs, which focus on building the child's skills, these routines become less rigid and less restrictive. Routines, however, will never be fully eliminated. Those that remain are often a source of great comfort in what is a complex environment for the person with autism.

Work supportively to change routines that are stigmatising for the child e.g. carrying large inappropriate objects etc. this can be accomplished by a program which gradually replaces the inappropriate object with a more appropriate or less obvious one; or it may be accomplished by making a contract with the child as to when and where he/she can have this comfort-object.

Intrusion from others:

The child with autism has great difficulty in processing social information, or in understanding the intentions and behaviour of others. Without this ability, the child can find the world of people a very unpredictable and stressful place. Consequently, the intrusion of others may be overwhelming.

In checking deteriorating behaviour it is reasonable and prudent to question if the teaching style adopted has been overly intrusive, or if the requirement for social proximity with others has been too great e.g. a child required to engage in a physical contact sport appears to cope for a short period of time and then suddenly for no apparent

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

reason becomes distressed

Strategy:

Lessen expectations for social participation, working gently and gradually to build the child's tolerance of social proximity and social demands.

It is worthwhile noting that many children will, in time, develop a tolerance and come to enjoy the social proximity and intrusion of familiar people with whom they feel secure

The demands of a task too high:

Children with autism have a very uneven developmental profile. Consequently, problems often occur due to the assumption that because they are skilled in one area, they will have a similar level of skill in another. This is not the case.

Therefore, where a child is exhibiting behaviour problems on presentation of a specific task, it should be considered if the demands of the tasks are too high.

Children with autism are extremely sensitive and distressed by failure and can become very upset when presented with tasks they do not understand.

Strategies:

Where a child is becoming upset, do not re-present the task in its current form. Break the task down and teach each step independently.

It is important to teach and not simply inadvertently test i.e. it is not sufficient to break down the task and re-present the work. Each step of the task must be taught.

Do not presume skills on a specific task from an assessment of skills in another area.

Frustration due to communication difficulties

One of the most significant, and often overlooked, sources of poor behaviour in autism is due to frustration caused by communication difficulties. Any child with communication difficulties will be prone to behaviour problems. The child may have little ability to influence or negotiate the demands of the social environment i.e. to communicate basic needs, to articulate distress, or to ask for help. It is important, therefore, to look at the occasions when behaviour problems are occurring.

Check the relationships between the child's behaviour and the skills and opportunities he/she has to make choices, express needs, and exert some control over the environment

Strategies

The child must be taught to communicate with visuals appropriate to their skill level.

All children with autism should have a communication assessment with a program put in place to support the child's everyday communication.

Sound Sensitivity:

Children with autism can experience sensitivity to some forms of sensory stimulation. In particular, they may experience acute discomfort in noisy environments, or to particular noises in their environment

Strategy

Should you see a relationship between the level of noise and the child's behaviour, arrange for alternate (quieter) activities for the child during these times

Insufficient structure in the environment :

Children with autism need a structured predictable setting, which allows them to make sense of their environment, the behaviour of others, and the expectations placed upon them.

Large open plan classrooms, with an open facilitative teaching approach are not suitable for the child with autism. At best, under these conditions, the child learns poorly. At worst, the child experiences chronic stress, often acting out anxiety through what appears unrelated behaviour problems.

Strategy

The only reliable strategy under these circumstances is in an alternative environment for the child, on providing a more structured approach to learning

NB A more structured environment does not imply a more restrictive one

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**The Effectiveness of a Home Program
Intervention for Young Children with
Autism Summary by John Christie**

Sally Ozonoff and Kristina Cathcart carried out a project to evaluate the effectiveness of a TEACCH-based program for young children with autism. In their report, published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, Vol 28, No 1, 1998, they show that the group receiving home-based treatment demonstrated significantly more improvement than the control group. The following table sets out the results.

The study was carried out in Salt Lake City, Utah and both the treatment group and the control group were enrolled in local day treatment programs, most receiving discrete trial methods.

Parents of the treatment group were encouraged to spend half an hour per day with their child using the same materials and techniques as in a weekly clinic session.

The study showed that a home-based program using the TEACCH approach is beneficial in improving the cognitive and developmental skills of young children with autism. Perhaps most importantly, the approach used does not place undue financial or other stress on a family, as other home-based programs are apt to do.

John Christie

The full article is available from www.kluweronline.com/ for a fee of \$25.00

Group Differences in PEP-R Scores (in months)				
	Treatment Group		Control Group	
	Pretest	Post-test	Pretest	Post-test
Imitation	17.9	27.0	20.0	22.9
Perception	26.3	43.9	33.5	39.8
Fine Motor	28.8	38.7	30.6	32.9
Gross Motor	29.8	38.5	31.8	31.5
Eye-hand Integration	27.1	34.4	32.6	36.2
Cognitive Performance	15.6	26.2	20.5	22.4
Cognitive Verbal	14.9	19.3	19.1	19.4
Total Pep-R Score	21.4	28.7	24.2	26.9