Simple strategies for effective engagement of autistic spectrum students to facilitate school success

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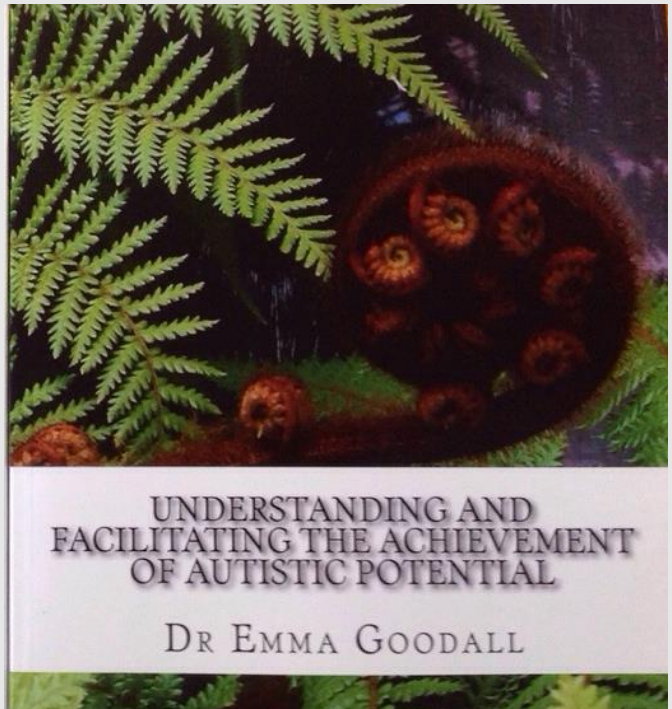
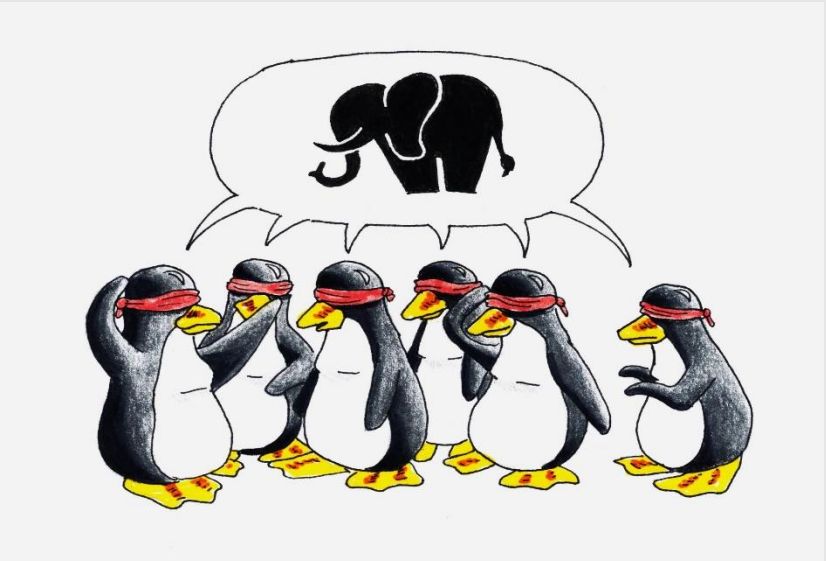
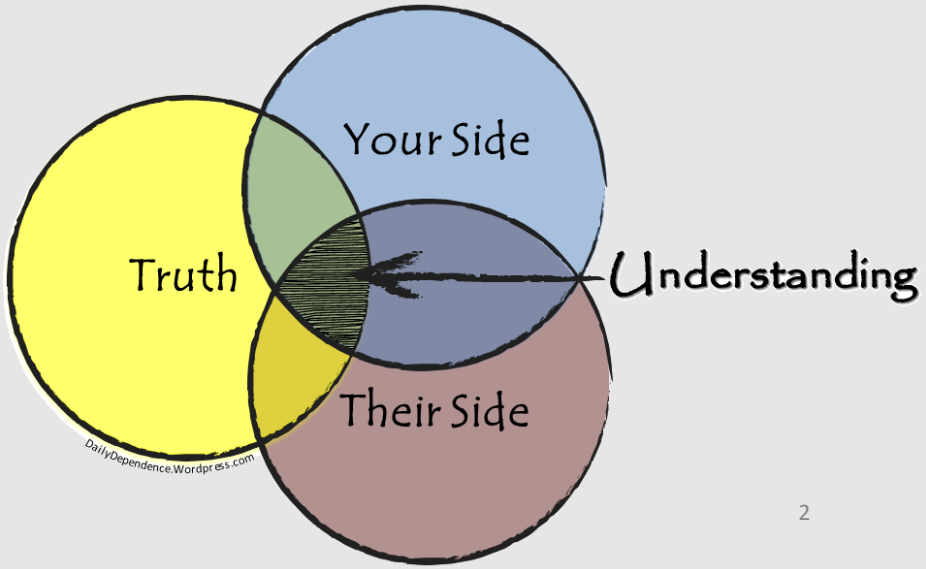


Effective teaching of autism spectrum students is:

- **Not** directly related what you know
- But **is** correlated to what you **understand**
- Also correlated to **positive interpersonal relationships** (Goodall, 2013)





Today we will look at

- Understand individual's autism and the impact of the autism on teaching and learning
- Simple but effective strategies to implement the curriculum in inclusive settings
- Minimizing behaviours of concern.

This will be done through giving you an insight into the experience and mind of autistic spectrum students of all ages.

Understanding an individual's autism

The diagnostic label tells you that the student:

- Thinks differently
- Experiences and responds to the world differently
- Has a different linguistic framework

It does NOT tell you

What the student is good at

What the student likes

What the student needs support with

Understanding your AS students

Find out:

- what/who they like
- what they are good at
- what interests them
- what/who they dislike
- what they struggle with
- communication style & type

& create a working profile

What/who they like

- People
- Places
- Things/objects
- Sensory inputs
- Stories/books/songs/movies

Sensory input

- Sensory input is perceived as either muted and/or intensified compared to typical people – this is often referred to as hypo and hyper sensitivity
- This leads to experiential differences
- This also helps explain sensory sensitivities and sensory seeking and/or avoiding behaviours

- Sight
- Sound
- Taste
- Touch/texture/feel
- Smell

- Vestibular – sense of balance
- Proprioception - sense of where our body is in space

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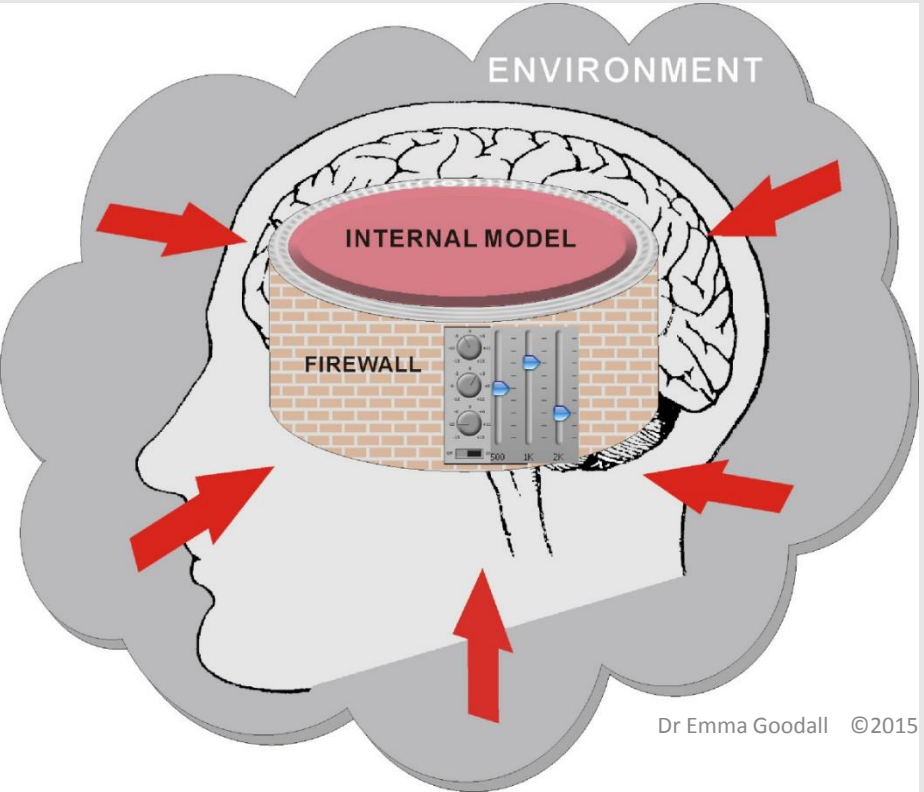

Typical people are able to both filter and prioritise sensory input. People on the autism spectrum struggle to do this and can easily become overwhelmed.

Practical Strategy:

- DO a sensory screen every six -12 months with the family
- DO not just note issues but record Known and possible strategies
- Come up with 1 or 2 preferred strategies that will aide the child/adult to self-regulate

SENSE OF BODY IN SPACE	Yes	No	Strategy
Does not seem to know where body is in space			
Gets lost in familiar places/routes			
Remembers routes and places			
Avoids escalators/travelators			
Dislikes crowds or being close to others			
Difficulties catching a ball			
Difficulties kicking a ball			
Appears not to see certain colours			
Walks into doors/people/objects			

What they are good at/what interests them

- Skills and knowledge
- Passions and interests

What/who they dislike

- People
- Places
- Things/objects
- Sensory inputs
- Stories/books/songs/movies

What they struggle with

Skills and knowledge:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Social/interpersonal
- Self awareness
- Academic
- Creative

Communication type and style

Auditory processing profile

Is the child verbal, non-verbal or partially verbal?

- Is their speech fluent?
- Is their speech fluid?
- Are there speech difficulties?
- How literal are they?

- What system of communication is in place?
- Who knows how to use this?
- If none – what choices are there?
- Who is going to train the staff and all the class to use the system?

- When does the child talk?
- When are they mute?
- What can support the child to communicate when they are non-verbal?

http://pxpinc.net/images/pic05.jpg

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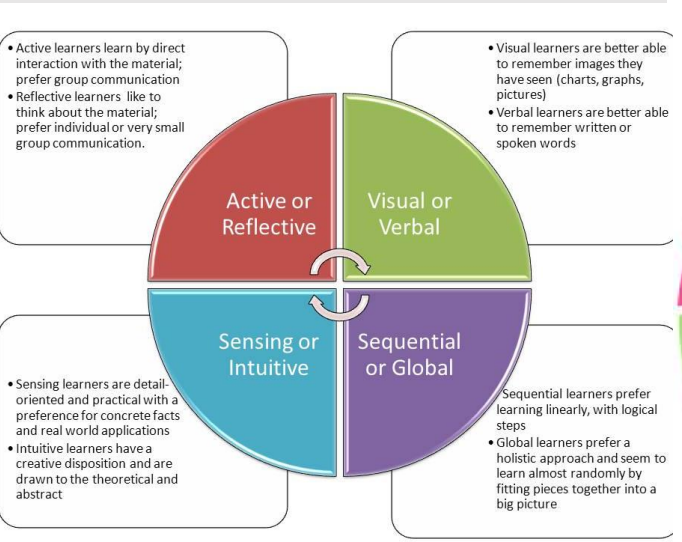
MYjVX7nU5PEGzi3JG8eIqQStQivrS7beMZUTvU5XtdpBrxf_w

Working profile

- Learns best through….
- Learns best when subject is…….
- Best method for student to demonstrate their learning is…..



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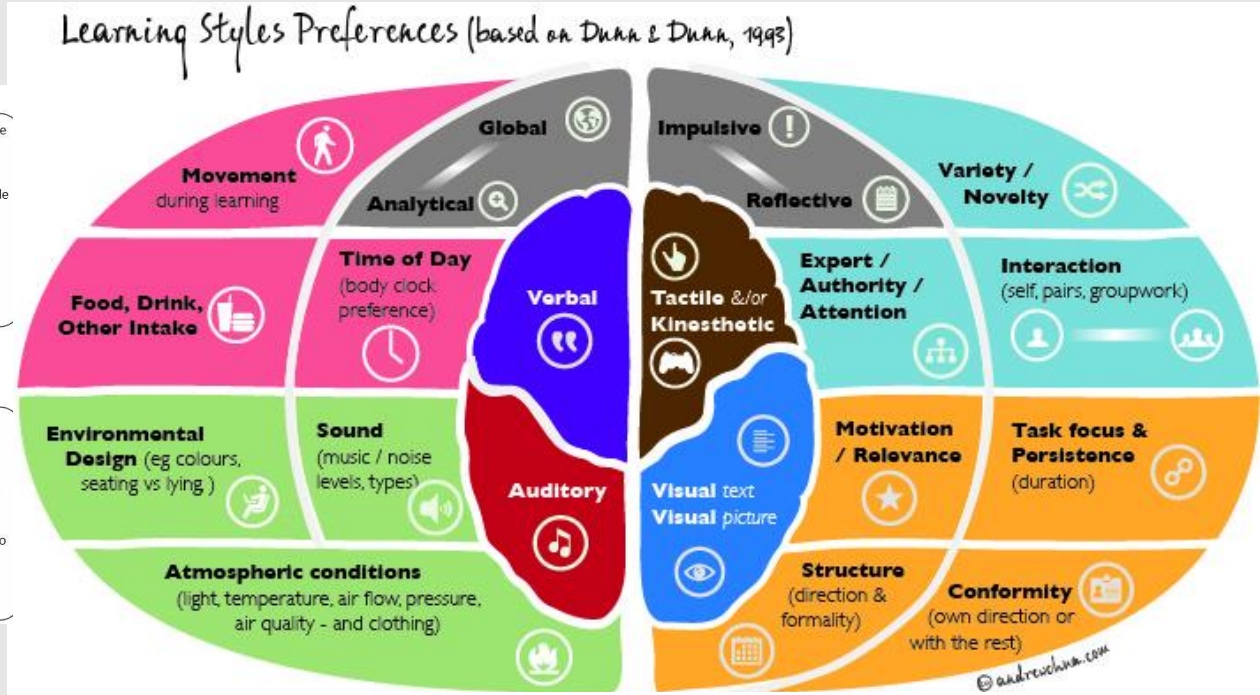
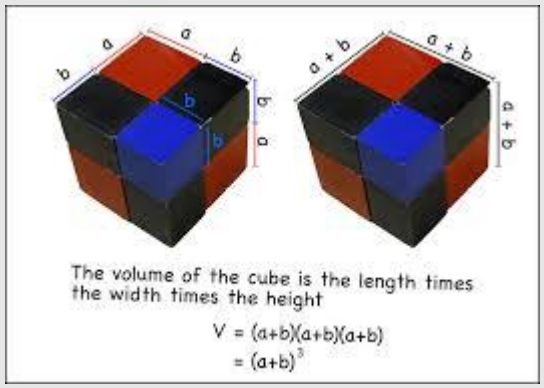


http://andrewchua.com/wp-content/uploads/learningpreferences.jpg

This base knowledge will help you to:

- Plan effectively
- Teach more effectively through interests/ passions
- Teach to the preferred learning style
- Minimize meltdowns
- Increase achievements



$$(a+b+c)^3 = a^3+b^3+c^3 +3a^2b+3a^2c+3b^2a+3b^2c+3c^2a+3c^2b +6abc$$

You may not KNOW what your students are thinking

But your base understanding of the AS student will give you an idea:

- Of how to engage their interest
- How to teach them most effectively
- What sensory input to minimize
- What sensory input to provide and when
- Why the student is distressed

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Communication strategy: saying what you mean and meaning what you say

- Explicitly explain phrases you commonly use, e.g. When I say you should be ready to work, I mean you must sit at your desk, have your pencil ready.... (use visuals to support complex instructions like this)
- Mean what you say. If you say the students have 5 minutes to do a task, mean that!
- Say what you mean. If the work is not good enough, say so and say why. If the work is a great effort, say that. Do not say both....

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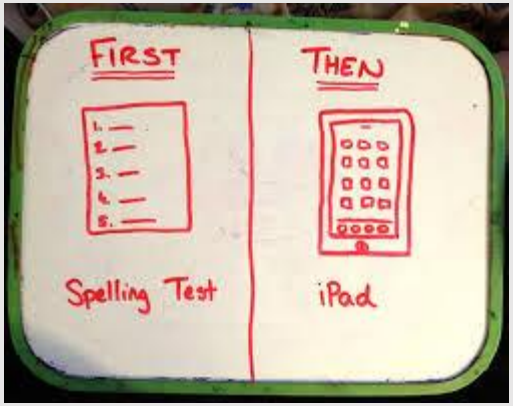
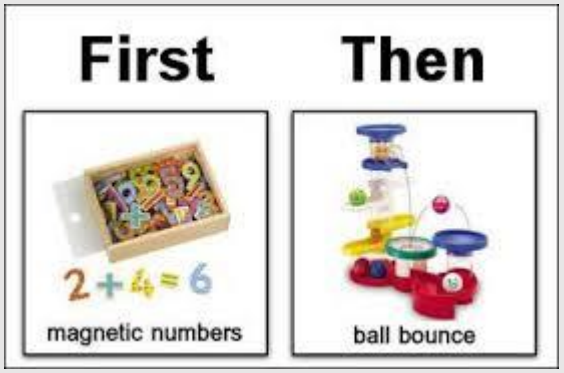
Practical Strategies:

Use visuals.





Be explicit.

You can go outside when I say so after the bell.

Sit here please.

Use simple one step instructions.

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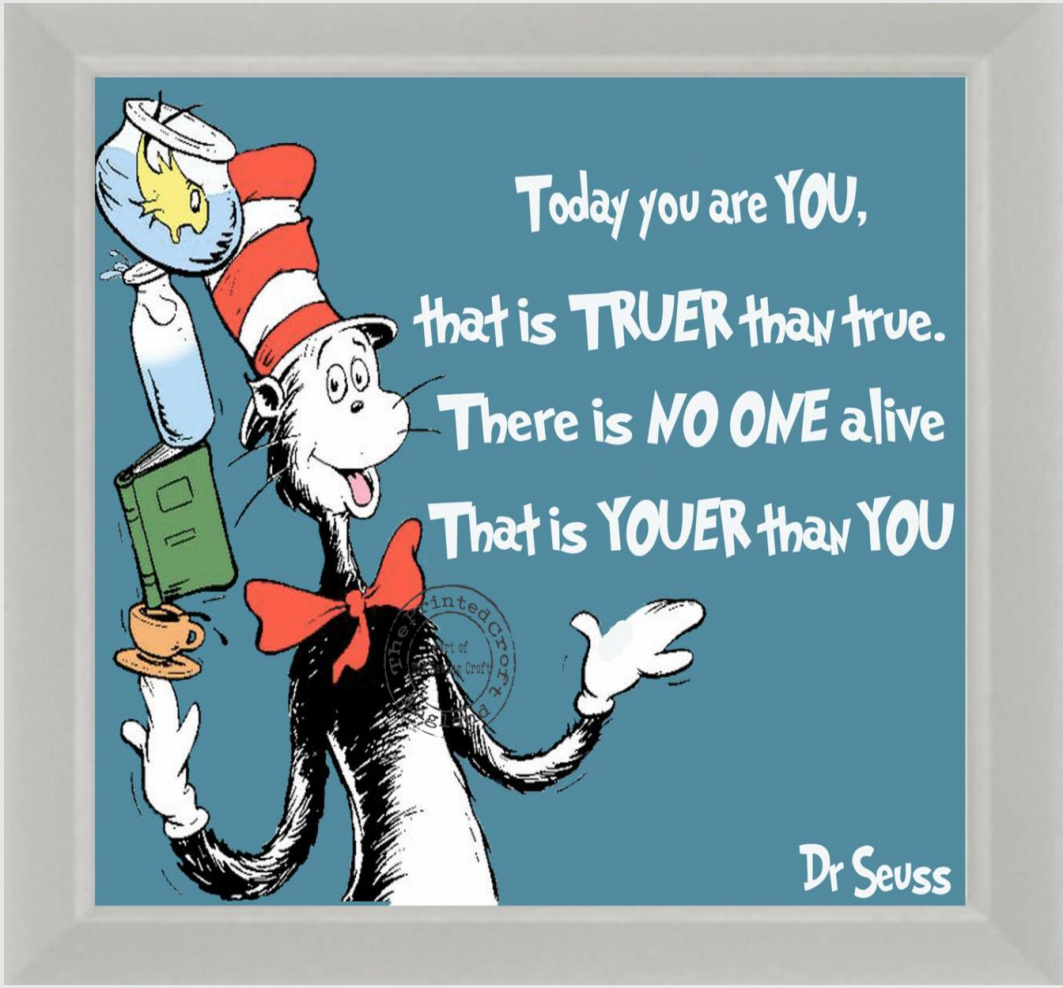
Don’t ask questions if you are not going to like the answers!

- Would you like to do your maths now? **NO**
- Would you like to Come inside now? **NO**
- Would you like to apologise to Sarah? **NO**



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Practical strategies:

- Give choices rather than ask questions
- Say do x please rather than asking would you do x?

Vocabulary Pick 3 Choice Board

Draw pictures that show the meaning of your vocabulary word.	Type your words and their definitions in a word document. Email to teacher.	Use each vocabulary word in a sentence.
Use your vocabulary words to write a fiction story.	Use a dictionary to find your vocabulary words. Write down the part of speech and definition.	Create a PowerPoint of your words and definitions. Email to teacher.
Take a practice quiz of your words with an adult. Adult initials _____	Use your words to create a puzzle on puzzlemaker.com. Attach the finished puzzle.	Make notecards with your words and definitions. Play a matching game. Adult initials _____

Choice Board

1. Choose a number.	2. Get a magazine.	3. Cut out pictures that show your number.	4. Glue your pictures to the correct number poster.

Or

1. Choose a number.	2. Look at our math word cards.	3. Find a card that matches the number you chose.	4. Sort them into the correct basket.

Created by Julie Dill -Math Coach, Wicomico County, 2010

Common issues with writing

Non-Autistic teachers view:

- teachers think young students need to write news every day to develop their writing skills
- teachers think handwriting practice is useful
- Writing skills indicate intelligence (not all teachers think this)

Autistic viewpoint:

- There is rarely **new**s about which to write or talk about so what exactly are they meant to write or talk about?
- If I can write why do I need to do it over and over? If I can't why do I need to be shown that I can't over and over?
- Teachers are very unclear about what they want.

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Why autistic spectrum students do write:

- Because it makes my teacher happy.
- Because I like seeing the words on the paper
- Because I know what I am supposed to write about and how to do it.
- Because I get computer time if I write a page.
- Because I can write about what I am interested in, so I write lots about Rugby stadiums when everyone else writes about other stuff.

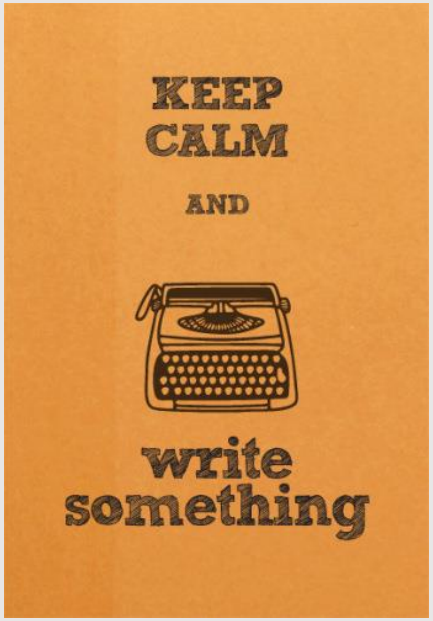
And why they don’t:

- I don’t like using a pen, if I can write in pencil then I don’t mind.
- The teacher says my writing is wrong but I like capital letters.
- I don’t know what I am supposed to do.
- I am not interested in sea creatures.
- Nothing new happened.
- I can’t be bothered, I’d rather draw.

Practical solutions for writing:

Teacher

- Be clear about why the students need to develop their writing or other communication skills
- Provide a visual checklist for the autistic spectrum student for their writing or communication
- Ensure the writing (or presentation) tasks reflect these reasons and are working towards the student's goals



Autistic spectrum student

- Understand that improving writing (or presentation) will help meet personal short term or long term goals
- Use the checklist to ensure you complete your writing (or presentation) tasks so that you benefit and your teacher is happy with you
- Communicate with your teacher

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blog

Share

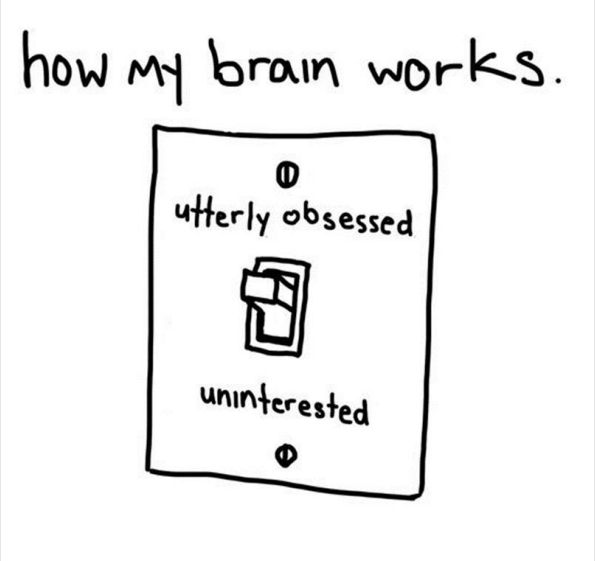
Shopping List
so that
mum will
buy food
you like!

To study
geology at
university

Is it Can't or won't?

- Instruction is not understood or received
- task is too hard
- Student is overwhelmed
- Student is preoccupied with sensory or emotional input

- Task is too easy
- Thinks task it too hard
- Task is uninteresting



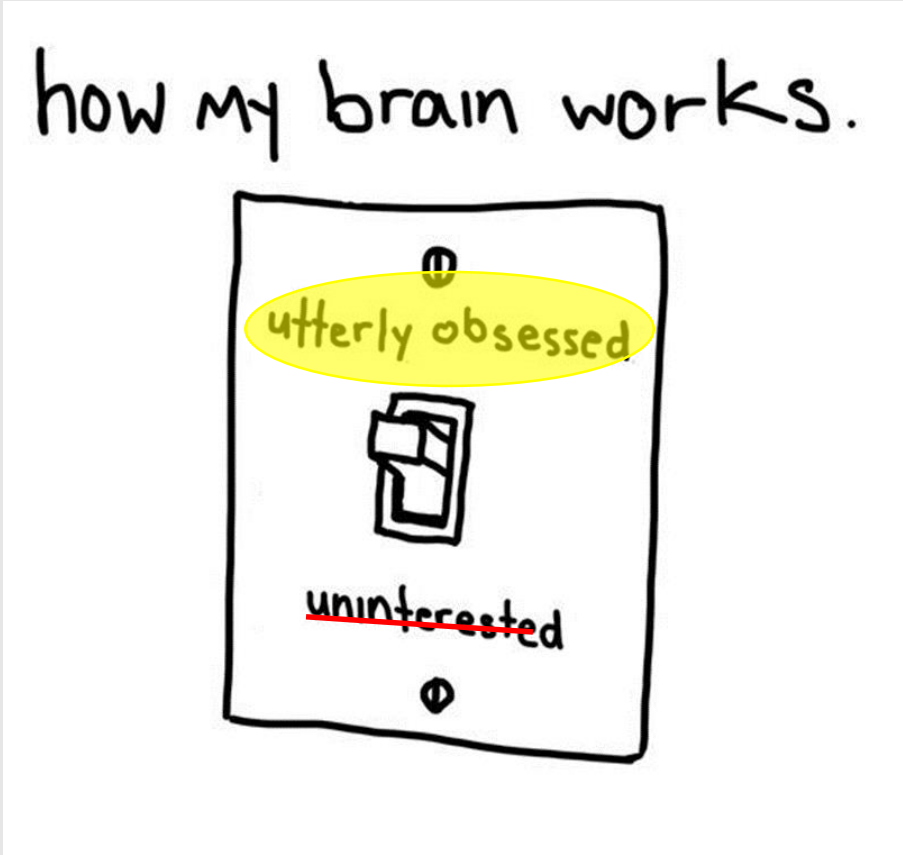
Does not want to work with a particular student or group of students due to prior bad experiences.

If the autistic spectrum students are disinterested:

- They will be bored
- They will disengage
- They will be off task
- They will engage in other things that are more interesting…

Practical Strategy: spark the interest of your autistic spectrum students:

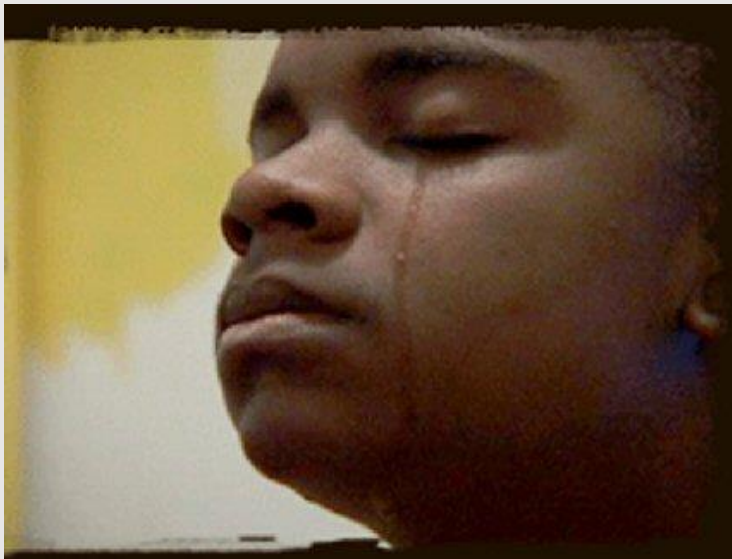
- Their knowledge and skills can be increased through broadening/deepening
- They will focus
- They will engage
- They will try harder
- They may share/teach others
- the topic/subject



Why students move from compliance to non-compliance:

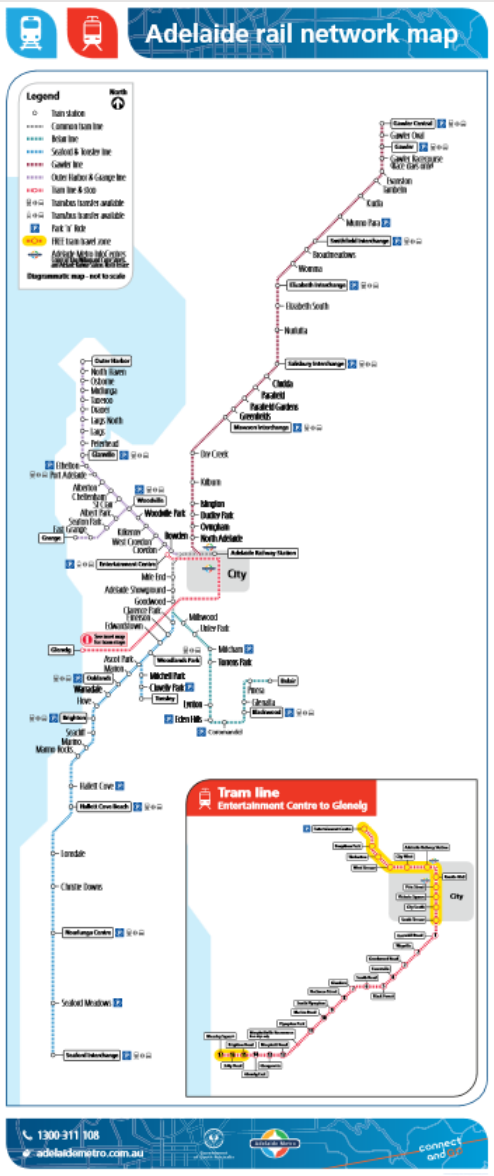
Usually caused by a sentinel event...

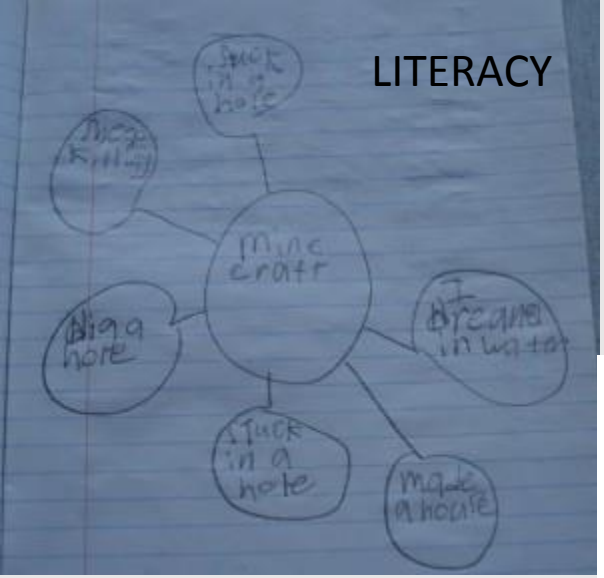
- "After my teacher refused to mark my five page story because he said my handwriting was too small, I never made my writing look nice again."
- "When my teacher said my story wasn't an appropriate subject to write about I stopped writing stories."
- "When my teacher made me I refused to go to his class ever again."



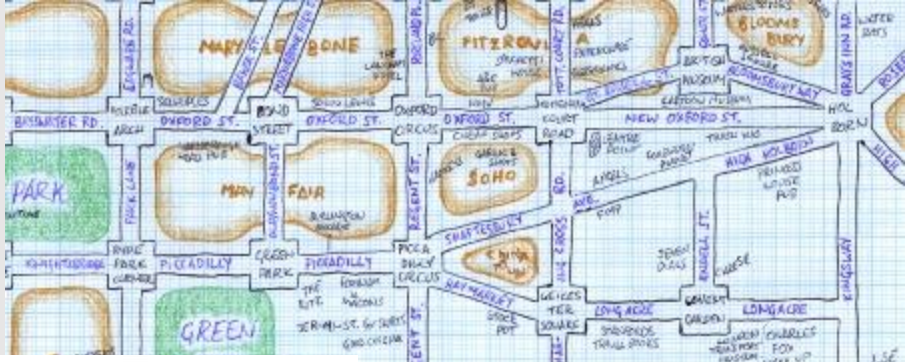
Practical solution: Using special interests/passions

- Student will work
- Student will work for longer
- Student will work at a higher level
- Interpersonal relationships will improve
- Student will feel more positive about school





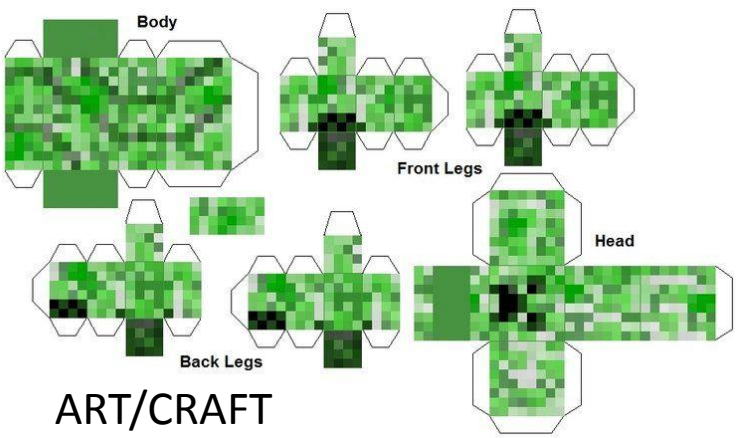
DANCE & MUSIC



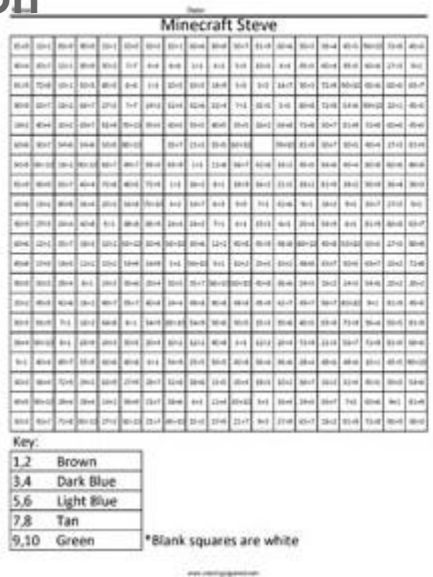
GEOGRAPHY

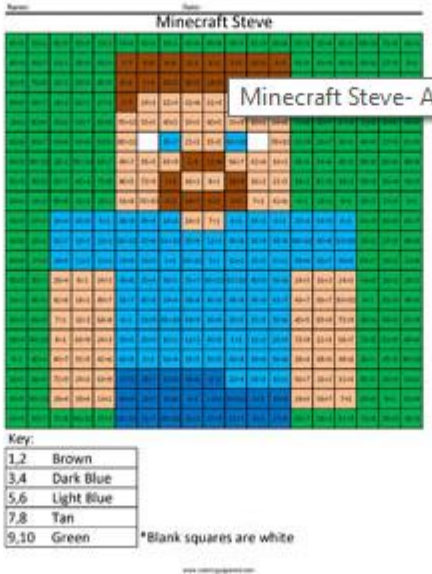
Design and build a working roller coaster in Minecraft. Do experiments on acceleration and velocity.

PHYSICS



ART/CRAFT





Minecraft Steve- Advanced Division

Minecraft Steve- Advanced Division Answer Key

problems and use the ke
at the bottom of the page to create a fun
Minecraft Steve picture.

Suggested Grade Level

3rd

MATHS

Factors affecting behaviour

What do educators (and families) need to consider?

http://drawception.com/pub/panels/2013/8-18/r983RDDGDq-10.png

Teacher views: challenging behaviour

- Work refusal
- Inappropriate tone/use of language
- Inappropriate physical interactions with peers
- Doing ‘own’ things instead of class work

The more verbal the child the more challenging these things are viewed as.

Teacher views: Types of challenging behaviour

Class work / activities

- Student won't do the work
- Student won't ask for help when they can't do the work
- Student won't join in group or class activities
- Student will join in but only if they can control the group or class

Communication & Interaction

- Student is too loud/quiet
- Student hurts others in class
- Student hurts others in playground
- Student is impolite
- Student doesn't respond to adult questions

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Behaviours of concern

- Self harm
- Harming others
- Damaging property

Flapping, rocking, other stims, lack of eye contact, echolalia and using non-verbal communication **ARE NOT** BEHAVIOURS OF CONCERN

Complications:

- Many people on the autism spectrum intensely dislike confrontation and will try to avoid it
- In order to avoid it they may; run away or lie
- **Being fair** and gaining the person's trust is vital to prevent these behaviours
- Some people on the autism spectrum seem to enjoy confrontations
- They may exhibit a number of aggressive or violent behaviours
- This may not have anything to do with creating confrontations at all
- It is important to work out why they engage in these behaviours

Problem solving behaviours of concern

- Collect data
- Prioritise issues according to safety of self and others, property, no safety issues
- Look at why the individual may be engaging in that behaviour and what it might be designed to communicate
- **Examine who it is a concern for and why**

Input from the individual

- Ask direct and non-judgemental questions
- Give time to process and respond
- Describe what you saw and ask for their interpretation
- Explain your interpretation **afterwards**
- Explain why behaviour is a concern

School Years

- Throws things including furniture
- Refuses to clean up the resulting mess

- Teacher thinks he is being naughty and that he “trashes the room when he is told he can’t do or have something he wants”

Data collection for schoolchild

- 5-10 times a day he throws his books and/or pencils etc across the room, always at transition between tasks or breaks in class.
- 2-3 times a day he then picks up his chair and/or desk and throws them.
- 5 – 7 times a week after throwing chair he will upend boxes of books and pull over storage shelves and rubbish bin

Data analysis for schoolchild

- Transition and break times are causing severe anxiety
- Does not know how to signal this anxiety appropriately
- Does not escalate when his aide/support worker says “books away, mat time”
- Escalates when aide/support worker not there.
- Severe escalation occurs prior to lunch and end of school on days Mum is not picking him up

Goal & Plan

Goal	Strategies	Prompts to be used	Reinforcers
To know who is going to pick him up every day	Visual on his table of 3pm plus photo and name of person picking him up that day (mum to do this every morning with him on arrival)	"Great, x is picking you up today." "We can tell x about your great ….. when they pick you up today."	Good behaviour certificate to be presented at end of day to the person picking him up.
To not throw his books/pencil etc	Provide first/then visuals Warn him 5 then 1 minute before transitions	"First a, then mat time" "In 5/1 minute you need to stop work and sit on the mat."	Smiles, stickers for coming to sit on mat without throwing things.
Evaluate playground at lunch to find out what is causing him anxiety	Support worker or teacher to observe lunch play for 2 weeks then analyse data	n/a	n/a

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With the team:

- **Set SMART goals and plan the replacement behaviour -** ALL behaviour is functional – the replacement behaviour MUST meet the same functional expression and sensory needs of the person
- Structure how to introduce replacement behaviour and reduce behaviour of concern
- Explain/discuss with the person again (should be involved from beginning)
- Start process (review goals monthly)

IEPs/NEPs promote achievement

Timely reviews of SMART goals

⬇

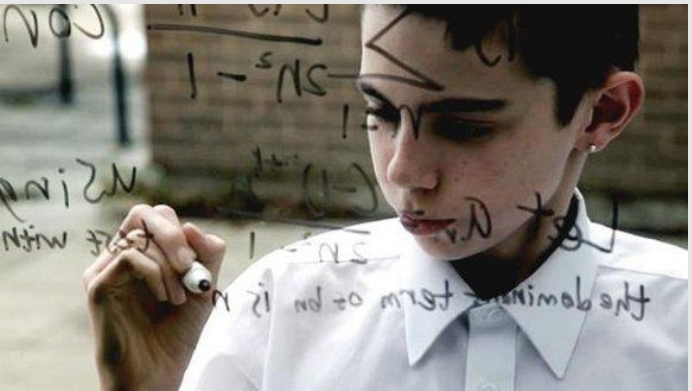
Demonstrates the success of autistic spectrum students

⬇

Promotes planning for achievement

⬇

Ensures teachers see these students as learners with potential



* Easy shortcuts

- If you do x – then you can have y, where Y is meaningful
- It makes me/your mum/the class/z (meaningful person) really happy when you do x. please do x.
- I really like it when…. (only works if the AS student likes you and believes you like them)

If someone on the AS doesn't do something they are asked is it generally because;

- They are in sensory overload &/or
- They don't understand what you want them to do &/or
- They don't know how to do what you want them to do
- &/Or… what you have asked them to do is illogical and so they won't do it because **it is silly**

- Make sure you are clear and explicit about what you want and that it is meaningful and the purpose is easily explainable. Ensure the learner has the tools to comply. If you think you can **make** them comply – think about how you can do this!

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are fostered by:

- An environment that meets the sensory needs of autistic spectrum children
- A teacher who communicates clearly and logically, explaining not just what to do, but why to do it with high expectations for behaviour and learning (and an understanding that meltdowns are not bad behaviour)
- Being able to learn new things using interests and then being encouraged to share new knowledge and skills and celebrate these
- Facilitating the making and sustaining of friendships

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For this Families/educators need:

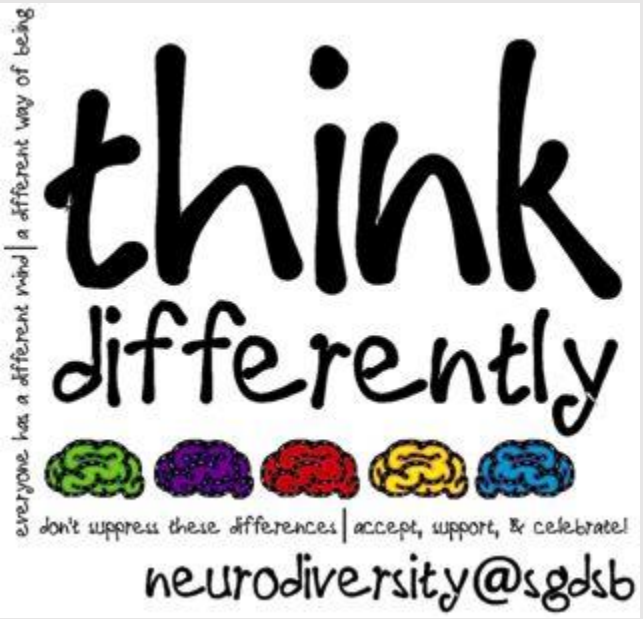
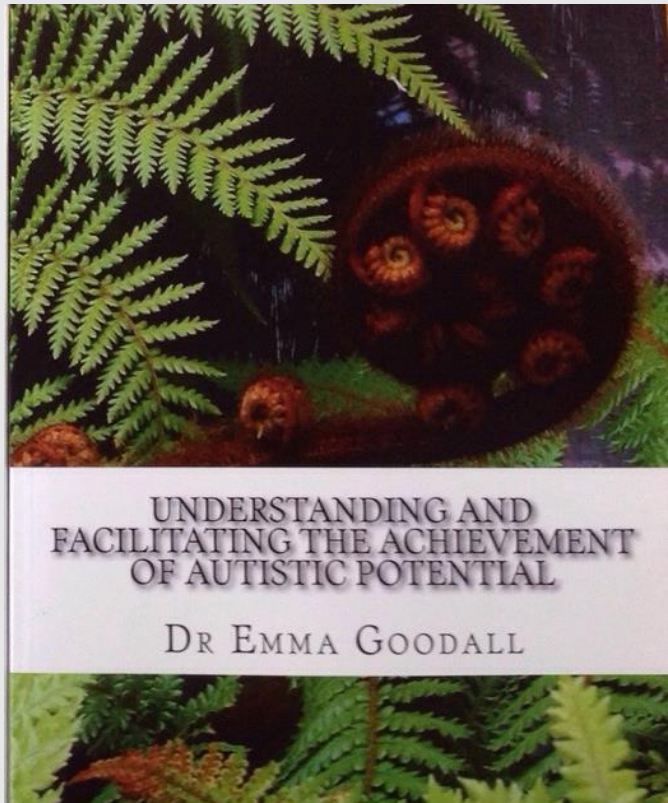
- To understand how autistic spectrum children think, interpret and interact with the world
- To use this understanding to influence the way they communicate and teach their autistic spectrum children
- To see their autistic spectrum children as learners with huge potential (to go to university, to have jobs, to have families etc)
- To have positive and constructive interactions with their autistic spectrum children

Achievement is personal progress and development:

Socially

Emotionally

Academically

Creatively

Physically