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PsychSpeak

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Cultural & Linguistic Differences or Learning Difficulties?

by Carol Kessler and Lora Sheridan

Part I: Considerations When Working with ELL Students

As our school population of ELL (English Language Learners) grows, teachers find themselves asking questions about the best way to teach these students. According to ESL Program Manager David Sisk, we currently have 6600 such students served in our system.



Because of this large number of students, questions about the best instruction for them may be common. What are a classroom teacher's options? What is causing a student to struggle? Is the student struggling because he or she is limited in English proficiency or has learning difficulties?

Dr. Samuel Ortiz, Professor of Psychology at St. John's University, says that there is no evidence that learning two languages at one time interferes with learning.¹ One of our first tasks as educators may be to identify to what stage the ELL learner has progressed in his language development. Is he in early produc-

tion of English, is he just emerging, is he at an intermediate stage, or easier to recognize, has he become fluent? To begin to understand the student's needs, we have to have a good understanding of his background information. How long has he been in our public schools? Is another language spoken at his home?

It is a difficult task to distinguish between lagging second language skills coupled with slow progress and learning disabilities. Dr. Suzanne Irujo, author, educator, and consultant in the ELL field, says that the two conditions may closely mimic one another.² She says that of six language processing deficits that we commonly find in ELL students, four of them can be present in the learning disabled population: poor attention skills, trouble interpreting verbal information, trouble retrieving stored information and difficulty organizing information.

According to Dr. Irujo, the two groups of students, the ELL and those with learning disabilities, need different types of remediation. Stu-

dents with learning disabilities have processing difficulties that are difficult or impossible to cure. They need to learn strategies to help them overcome their disabilities. ELL students without learning difficulties need large amounts of exposure to meaningful language. Special education classes will not address the ELL student's needs if he is not truly learning disabled.

So what is a teacher to do? See Part II in an upcoming newsletter for more information on best practices of working with ELL students.

¹ "Evidence-Based Instruction and Evaluation of English Language Learners", Samuel O. Ortiz, Ph.D.

² "When an ELL Has Difficulty Learning, Is the Problem a Disability or a Second-Language Acquisition Process?", Suzanne Irujo, Ed.D.

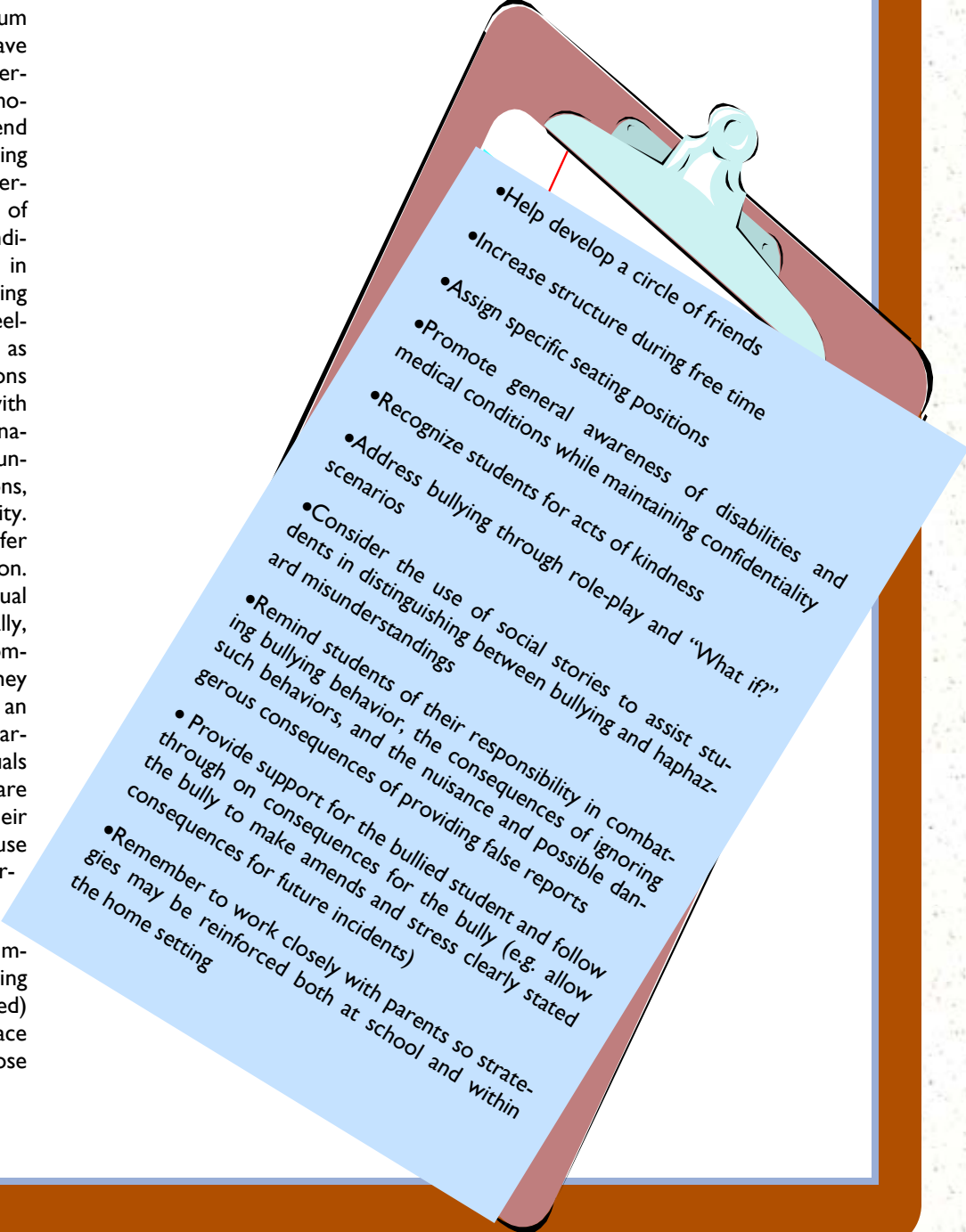


HELP COMBAT BULLYING FOR THOSE WHO MAY NOT RECOGNIZE IT

By Hawa Chaudhary

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) generally have difficulty recognizing, understanding, and expressing emotions and feelings. They tend to have a literal understanding of language and may misinterpret facial expressions, tone of voice, or sarcasm. These individuals experience difficulty in understanding and predicting the intentions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of others as well as in imagining situations which are inconsistent with their routine. Their social naivety causes them to be unaware of others' intentions, resulting in social vulnerability. Individuals with ASD prefer structure and play in isolation. They may speak in an unusual manner, behave eccentrically, or make inappropriate comments or movements. They have a tendency to exhibit an overwhelming interest in a particular item. For individuals with ASD, these difficulties are not only problematic in their daily functioning but cause them to be vulnerable as targets for bullying.

Several strategies may be implemented to combat bullying behavior (real or perceived) and make school a safer place for all students, including those with ASD.

- 
- Help develop a circle of friends
 - Increase structure during free time
 - Assign specific seating positions
 - Promote general awareness of disabilities and medical conditions while maintaining confidentiality
 - Recognize students for acts of kindness
 - Address bullying through role-play and "What if?" scenarios
 - Consider the use of social stories to assist students in distinguishing between bullying and haphazard misunderstandings
 - Remind students of their responsibility in combating bullying behavior, the consequences of ignoring such behaviors, and the nuisance and possible dangerous consequences of providing false reports
 - Provide support for the bullied student and follow through on consequences for the bully (e.g. allow the bully to make amends and stress clearly stated consequences for future incidents)
 - Remember to work closely with parents so strategies may be reinforced both at school and within the home setting

New Year - New Teaching Opportunity

by Cherie Urban



The celebration of the New Year is the oldest of all holidays, beginning in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. Julius Caesar started the tradition of making resolutions on January 1st as a way of honoring the Roman God Janus, whose two faces allowed him to look back on the past and forward to the future.

Today, we continue to celebrate the only holiday that notes the passage of time. Maybe it's inevitable that we become motivated by the idea of starting fresh and improving ourselves. Even though children may not be aware of the tradition of making New Year's resolutions, this can be a wonderful teaching opportunity. Start by stating your own goals; be prepared to dis-

cuss! Next, ask your students if they have any ideas for resolutions of their own. Keep in mind that kids will be more likely to stick with something that motivates them. Focus on realistic targets with results that can be tracked (such as "I will read 20 minutes per day" instead of "I will read more"). Finally, remember that children learn best by example, so keep in mind you're being watched!

Note: The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has a list of 20 age-appropriate resolutions for children. Click [here](#) to see them broken down into three age groups: Preschoolers, Kids (5-12), and Kids (13 years and older).

Mined by Alana

Intervention Gem: Graphing Data



One of the key aspects of making decisions about student's progress is through visual displays of the outcomes of the data collection process. These displays offer an effective way to communicate student progress to parents and between teachers as well as to students themselves. Hand-drawn graphs are useful; however, you may be interested in a graphing tool. Check out Jim Wright's free [ChartDog Graphmaker](#).

Steps for a Great Visual Presentation:

- Step 1: Identify the metric used to collect data (Y-axis). For example, words correct per minute, cumulative problems learned, number of pages mastered, number of homework problems done correctly, or other measure.
- Step 2: Identify the possible range the metric can occupy. Consider numbers representing the lower and upper limits.
- Step 3: The range for the metric is placed on the Y-axis. It is divided into equal units.
- Step 4: Identify the amount of time across which the data will be collected. This will be plotted across the X-axis.

The Autism Team & the ADOS

NEXT Issue: It's Not Just LD!
Coming in March.

A group of WS/FCS psychologists has undergone specific training on the use of the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) in order to learn how to conduct more in-depth autism assessments.

The team is available to assist the home school psychologist when the question of autism spectrum disorder is being considered as a potentially new classification. The team has been trained to use the ADOS, which is considered to be the "gold standard" for assessing and diagnosing autism spectrum disorder across ages, developmental levels, and language skills. There are also some speech therapists and occupational therapists in our system that have gone through the ADOS training as well, and their perspective as team members is quite valuable.

The ADOS is a assessment tool that can be used to evaluate almost anyone

suspected of having autism and is appropriate to use with toddlers up through older adults.

The format of the instrument is divided into four modules, based on a combination of the verbal abilities and the age of the student being assessed. It can be used with young children who are nonverbal all the way to those who are verbally fluent. However, there is not a module for nonverbal adolescents or adults.

The ADOS was designed to provide opportunities for the team to observe social and communicative behaviors within a semi-structured setting. The activities provide standard contexts for interaction and prompts for communication. The role of the team is to watch how the student reacts to the various activities and prompts that are provided. (It is an Observation

Schedule, after all.) This is best conducted as a team approach with one person conducting the assessment while two others are actively observing, taking notes, and keeping a running tally on the language and behaviors exhibited by the student throughout the entire process.

The results from the ADOS team are just one more piece of information available to the IEP team in consideration of the most appropriate goals and placement decisions for a student. With the prevalence of autism spectrum disorders continuing to rise, we are fortunate to have so many trained team members in our district.

By Ellen Waldrep

Shown here are Ellen Waldrep (L), Jason Levi, and Marty Farmer (R) looking over some information together after a recent staff meeting.



Accommodation

Intervention

Modification

What Does it all Mean Anyway?

By Clara Chavez

It is important to understand not only what our students need, but also what we can do to help them. While accommodations may be helpful with increasing student success, determining whether students have the ability to be successful may depend on implementing targeted interventions tailored to their individual needs.

According to the National Center on Response to Intervention (2011), accommodations are changes in instruction that enable children to demonstrate their abilities in the classroom or the assessment/testing setting. Accommodations provide equity and are not meant to give an advantage. They do not reduce or lower the standards or expectations for content. Generally, the student product with accommodations is equal to the student product without accommodations. Some examples of accommodations are as follows:

- More time to complete work
- Oral responses instead of written responses
- Study guides before tests
- Allowing movement to increase physical comfort

If a change made to the instruction and/or assessment allows for demonstration of mastery of the goal, then the change is an accommodation.

If the goal is to have student learn the same content as all students and produce the same product as other students, do not provide modifications to any assignment/instructional activity related to that goal. Instead, provide

the student with **accommodations** to complete the assignment/instructional activity.

Accommodation or Modification?

If a student is expected to complete 100% of every math assignment given to other students, reducing the number of problems would be a modification. However, if a student is expected to show they could add 2-digit numbers with 100% accuracy allowing the student to work just enough problems (on each assignment) to show mastery of the goal, that would be an accommodation. (Goal is the same for **all** students.)

Interventions are specific, targeted strategies used to teach a new skill, build fluency in a skill, or encourage the application of existing skills to a new situation. Interventions should include a targeted assessment, planning, and data collection. Likewise, interventions should be scientifically research-based, monitored regularly to determine student progress and inform for instructional decision-making. Some examples of interventions are as follows:

- Underline word and phrase clues that lead to making inferences
- Echo reading: the student imitates the teacher's oral rendition, one sentence or phrase at a time
- Use of fluency charts, with sight words, phonics, or phrases, to increase automaticity
- Explicit time-drills on basic math facts

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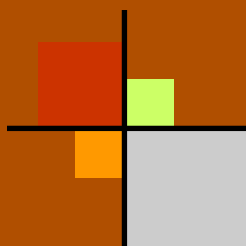
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★ Check out the cool blog from ★
★ Jennifer (R) & Angela (L)! ★
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Click on This:

[School Psychology 101 Blog](#)

[Visual Cues to Help the Behavior of Young Children](#)



Spotlight on
One of Our Own

When Alison Sharp stepped in as School Psychologist for Rebecca Rugh-Webb during her leave of absence this year, she had no idea how much fun she could have while helping to bring increased literacy options to one of the schools she was assigned to serve: Easton Elementary School.

Alison loves reading and reading to her own children, and she started offering donated books from her family and friends, as well as those purchased at used book stores, to Ms. Onwuemene, Media Specialist. She also shared some for the Home-School Coordinator, Angela Miller, to help entertain children during parent meetings. As Alison puts it, "I'm going to keep bringing books until people tell me to stop!"

Alison has solicited the help of her mother, Mrs. Carol Radcliffe, with this project. Mrs. Radcliffe has set a goal of sending at least 100 books to Easton! There is no doubt Alison and her mother will achieve this goal! "It is amazing how blessings come your way," observed Ms. Celena Tribby, Principal of Easton Elementary. "Alison heard of a need and just started making it happen! This is proof that one person can make a difference! Thank you so much for thinking of our students and staff!"

Alison plans to be with us through the middle of February.

Adult Bullying: When the Playground Bully Grows Up

While a lot of our focus on bullying centers around children and adolescents, we need to realize that there are adults who bully. Oftentimes, adults who bully were bullies during their childhood, the victims of bullying, or both. While many people grow and mature, stopping the behaviors of their youth, this is not always the case.

Simply put: Adult bullying is a problem, and, unlike bullying among youth and adolescents, there are limitations on what one can do about their behavior.

Why? Overall -- it is important to note that adults who bully are not typically interested in trying to work things out and they are not, according to Bullying Statistics, interested in compromise. Rather, adults who bully are more interested in power and domination. They typically want to feel as though they are important and they work to accomplish this by bringing others down.

According to Bullying Statistics, the goal of an adult bully is to: **gain power over another person, and make herself or himself the dominant adult.** Adults who bully try to humiliate victims and show who "is the boss." Bullying Statistics has outlined several different types of adults who bully and, for all of us, it helps to know who they operate. They include:

1. **Narcissistic Adult Bully:** One who is self-centered, does not share empathy with others and has little anxiety about the consequences of their behavior. In reality, a narcissistic adult bully needs to put others down in order to make him or her feel good about him or herself.
2. **Impulsive Adult Bully:** One who is spontaneous and has a hard time restraining her or his behavior. This type of behavior, in certain cases, can be unintentional particularly when he or she is under stress and is actually upset or concerned about something else unconnected with the victim.
3. **Physical Bully:** While adults are more likely to use verbal bullying as opposed to physical bullying --- there are bullies who may try to harm the victim physically **or** they may use the threat of physical harm. In addition, a physical bully may damage or steal a victim's property, rather than physically confronting the victim.
4. **Verbal Adult Bully:** Let's face it -- words can hurt! Adult bullies who use this type of tactic may start rumors about the victim or use sarcastic or demeaning language to dominate or humiliate another person. This type of bullying, unfortunately, can be difficult to document. However, the emotional and physical impacts of verbal bullying can be felt acutely and can result in reduced job performance if this is done in the workplace and can lead to someone suffering from depression.
5. **Secondary Adult Bully:** This is someone who does not initiate the bullying --- **but** -- this person joins in the bullying behavior so that he or she does not become the victim of bullying down the road. Secondary bullies may feel bad and may show remorse about what they have done, but they tend to be more concerned about protecting themselves.

How does one deal with an adult who bullies? The best approach is to ignore and to avoid the person because an adult bully's goal is to seek out an emotional response. **If the bullying occurs in the workplace,** the best thing to do is to report the behavior to one's direct supervisor or to the company's human relations department or as outlined through the company's policy and procedure manual for employees.

Source: Bullying Statistics. **Web:** www.bullyingstatistics.org

Thank you to Andy Hagler, MEd, MPA, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association in Forsyth County, Inc., for sharing this information with us. Andy is a friend of Pam Pepper, PhD, WSIFCS School Psychologist. Dr. Pepper served on the Board of Directors of the Mental Health Association for several years while in private practice prior to joining our department in 2007.