




**EARLY LITERACY AND THE
AUTISM SPECTRUM LEARNER**

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AGENDA

- How I became an “expert”
 - ASD background, statistics
 - What educators need to know
 - Development
 - Early literacy
 - Making print meaningful
 - Focus on comprehension
 - Consider this:
 - Resources
 - Q & A
- 

MEET JACKSON:

- Our Journey
- Current progress
- Know us better:
<http://hope4jackson.blogspot.com>



AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER:

- Developmental delay marked by speech and social deficits and often accompanied by repetitive behaviors
- Most recent statistics:
 - 1 in 110 children
 - 1 in 70 boys
- *That's a 600% increase in the last 20 years**
- Spectrum Variety
- Medical diagnosis
- Treatment options

* www.autismspeaks.org



WHAT EDUCATORS NEED TO KNOW

- Concise Directions
 - Avoid “don’t”
 - Be brief
 - Use visuals
- Visual Learners
- Behavior = communication
- Sensory Issues
- Fine Motor Delays
 - Letter formation difficult
- Importance of Routine
 - Visual schedule
 - Prepare for unexpected
 - Coping skills
 - Mix it up



First → **Then**



DEVELOPMENT

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Neurotypical” child <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sequential ● Gains language via exposure ● Curious, Explores ● Observant, mirror behaviors of those around them | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child with Autism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wires crossed ● Language Delay ● Introspective ● May have “gaps” or “splinter skills” ● Very Literal |
|--|---|



Emotion



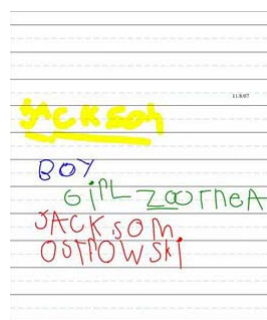
EARLY LITERACY

- Alphabetics
- Phonics
- Phonemic Awareness
- Fluency
- Comprehension
- Vocabulary
- Eye contact: looking at print
- Over exposure to text
- Beware of Book Language
- Limited Vocabulary
- Literal learners



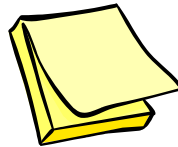
MAKING PRINT MEANINGFUL

- Know student schema
- Use student generated stories
- Use props to help them generate
- High interest texts
- Photographs



FOCUS ON COMPREHENSION

- Reading instruction must be meaning driven
- Use comprehension strategies
 - Engage Schema
 - Visualize
 - What does this make you *think* of
 - Notes as you go



CONSIDER THIS:

- These kids have problems on so many levels; pay attention to all of them. And basically they really need to analyze ALL the levels of deficit. For example (excluding the highest functioning, of course)-
 - poor vocabulary (even words we assume they know they may not, therefore creating yet another comprehension problem)
 - poor auditory channel (like REALLY poor auditory processing)
 - lack of background knowledge and ability to tie together what they read with what they have experienced
 - inability to zoom in on the essential (perhaps some of this is just dev. delay, but the degree to which they get sidetracked is much worse than your typical younger child)
 - inability to create mental images of what they read
 - just really poor ability to inference, connect the dots
 - no sense of "gestalt". none.
 - classical autism issues involving theory of mind making it hard to follow what characters think, feel, motivations etc
 - miscellaneous- focus etc.

Also beware of the initial excitement of "oh, he is so smart, he can read", when in fact, these kids are equally screwed by their total inability to understand what they read which makes their reading nothing more than a parlor trick.



RESOURCES

- <http://www.autism-society.org>
- www.autismspeaks.org
- www.generationrescue.org
- <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/fmain1.html>
- <http://www.spectrumtrainingsystemsinc.com/scottbellini.html>
- <http://www.rdiconnect.com/>



QUESTION & ANSWER

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