WHAT'S NEW

iPads have recently been rolled out for two week loan to eligible borrowers. As there is a long waiting list borrowers may like to come in and try one of the iPads, iPod Touches and Digital Pens, all permanently located in the resource centre.

SERU held a number of video conferences on iPads in Special Education; this recording is now available on the workshops page of the SERU website.

Building Relationships

This term SERU hosted a visit by nine teachers from the Shosho Yogo Special School, Japan. The group visited Adelaide West Special Education Centre, Mitcham Primary School and Unley High School Link Programs, Kidman Park Primary School and attended training in Assistive Technologies at SERU. Mr Kuroda commented ‘I was impressed by the warm and sincere attitude by the staff to their students. I felt strongly that there is no boundary in special education and we are able to share the same values and heart despite other differences between the countries.’

There was also a visit by the Manager Special Education and the Senior Special Education Advisor from the Northern Territory, who are interested in establishing a new service to support special education teachers, based on the SERU model. Both visits provided SERU staff and the visitors the opportunity to share practices and establish reciprocal ongoing relationships.

In this edition of the SERUpdate authors from DECS, Flinders University, Autism SA, Novita, the Down Syndrome Society of SA, Siblings Australia and Relationships Australia Australia provide information on a range of social skills programs, buddy and peer programs, research projects and resources. For children to feel secure in their school environment and build positive relationships with each other, teachers need to provide an environment that fosters trusting relationships free from bullying and criticism. These initiatives, programs and resources provide examples of how teachers can build relationships between their students and develop positive social skills which result in students being better equipped to progress in their learning.

Dymphna James
Assistant Manager, SERU
### In This Issue

#### Focus Articles

1. **Better Buddies Programme** - Penne Paltridge, Moorak Primary School
2. **Advocacy and Awareness** - Matthew Chapman, DECS
3. **Building Positive Relationships in Special Class** - Martha Botha, Para Hill Primary School
4. **William Light Peer Mentor Program at Ashford Special School** - Andrew Delaney, Ashford Special School
5. **Does it Matter That I Have Friends and Can Share My Feelings?** - Dr Katherine Dix, Flinders University
6. **Framework for Setting up Buddy Programs to Support Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder** - Vanessa Alexander, DECS
8. **Building Peer Connections for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Mainstream Schools** - Joanna Zeitz - Living with Autism Program
9. **Increasing Students Understanding of People with Complex Communication Needs to Foster Relationships and Interaction** - Amanda Denley, Novita Children’s Services
10. **Siblings at School** - Kate Strohm, Sibling Australia
11. **Teaching the Skills for Building Relationships in the Secondary Years for Students with Down Syndrome** - Anne Squire, Down Syndrome SA Inc

#### Regular Features

12. **Spotlight on SERU Resources**
13. **Be Cool CD Series on Conflict Management** - Craig Johnson, Henley Beach Primary School
14. **Resources Related To The Topic**
15. **Journal Articles Related To The Topic**
16. **Web Links**
17. **TechBits**
18. **New Resources**
19. **Upcoming Events**

---

*supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities and learning difficulties*
Moorak Primary School is in a rural setting near Mount Gambier in the Limestone Coast region. The clientele consists of both rural students and those who reside in nearby Mount Gambier. The school caters for students in kindergarten up to year 7, with 12% of students with learning difficulties and identified disabilities.

A characteristic of Moorak Primary School is that it has an atmosphere that is encouraging and supportive of children and their needs. Due to the changing demographics of the local area, the school’s kindergarten enrolment has increased significantly. The school has established an excellent transition programme ensuring that by the time students start reception they are very familiar with the school.

Transition from preschool to primary school is ‘seamless’ for those accessing the preschool program and continuing primary school enrolment on site. However for some of the students enrolling from other kindergartens or schools it is more difficult to settle in and this was affecting their achievement levels and social aspects of their learning.

As student counsellor I began to investigate existing programmes that could help and came across a programme from the Alannah and Madeline Foundation called Better Buddies. The Alannah and Madeline Foundation’s Better Buddies Framework is an initiative designed to create friendly and caring primary school communities, which aim to reduce bullying. Although bullying wasn’t a significant issue at the school, the program was appealing because of the connections between younger and older children. It gives the younger students the security of knowing that there is someone within the school that they feel safe with and can go to for advice and help. The values of the programme complement Moorak Primary School values: caring for others, friendliness, respect, valuing difference, including others and responsibility. Better Buddies enables younger students to feel safe and cared for, while older students feel valued and respected as a result of the leadership role they are implementing.

The research and investigation phase included visiting another school in the district that runs the programme and has had great success with it.

Upon receiving acceptance as a Better Buddy school in 2010, time was allocated in the student counsellor timetable to train older students in the programme. The induction program focussed on learning about the background of the Better Buddies programme and why it was set up, students then completed a number of activities that were aimed to assist them to become Better Buddies. A package contains a folder with lots of activities, access to the website and quality support from the people at the Alannah and Madeline Foundation. In bigger schools this programme is set up between children in their first year at primary school and children in their last year of primary school, but as Moorak Primary School is a small school, we chose to implement it through the entire school.

I'll lean on you and you lean on me and we'll be okay.  

Dave Matthews Band
The allocation of specific buddying partnerships was made easier by having a sound knowledge of students and their personalities. Initially younger and older students were partnered, then assembled into larger groups. Within the groups there were boys and girls from all ages. This means that if someone is away other older buddies look after the younger buddies from within their group, so they already know them and are comfortable with them.

Moorak Primary School is currently in the first year of implementing the Better Buddies programme and it is considered to have been very successful. The Student Representative Council (SRC) has been involved in the planning, running and organising of the programme ensuring that the students have input and ownership into the activities that are run. To ensure success of the programme staff agreed to schedule two buddy afternoons a term. In 2011 students have participated in a getting to know you activity, a sports afternoon, a teddy bear’s picnic where the school community was also invited, cooking, bubble blowing, a treasure hunt and a peace path. This term Buddy Bear and book week combined dress up day and activities. In addition to the scheduled special events afternoons there is a designated day for buddy lunches every week. The students have an extended lunch eating period where they find their buddies, interact and eat their lunch together. This regularly scheduled eating component strengthens existing relationships between the buddies.

At the start of the year the Alannah and Madeline foundation provided a tub of Buddy Bears for the school to use. We chose to implement a monthly “Better Buddy” award. Each class and teacher chooses a person from within their class who shows outstanding buddy qualities. These children receive a certificate and the principal then chooses one of these recipients to receive a buddy bear. It has proven to be a very popular award, although sometimes a little tough to choose.

Some positive outcomes from the programme are:

1. The allocation of the buddies for new students widens friendship networks and knowledge of school rules.
2. There is a noticeable use of peer mediation in the yard. In many cases younger students prefer to seek help from older peers. For example, a younger buddy went to their older buddy during lunch after he fell to the ground.

The highlight of the year for the students was a visit from Buddy Bear himself. The Alannah and Madeline Foundation were in town to present a bullying seminar and incorporated a visit to the school. It was very exciting and the children received stickers, friendship bands and tattoos. The local paper also completed a write up about the visit and the Better Buddies programme.

The journey we have had with the Better Buddies programme has proven to be a very positive and rewarding one. It is fully supported by the staff, students and parents of our school and I can see it continuing to grow and develop positively.

References

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation

Penne Paltridge
Counsellor, Moorak Primary School
Ph: 87266261
ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

Schools undertake a range of peer support programs, buddy systems and mentoring programs to support the wellbeing of all children and students in education and care settings.

Adjunct Professor Ken Rigby, member of South Australia’s Coalition to decrease bullying, harassment and violence, has provided an international literature scan regarding students with disabilities and bullying. It provides compelling evidence of the need to provide safe and supportive environments for all students. Of particular interest, Professor Rigby noted: children with disabilities are at greater risk of being teased and physically bullied (Martlew & Hodson, 1991; Mishna, 2003; Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993; Thompson, Whitney, & Smith, 1994). Children with disabilities are more likely than other children their age to be victimised by peers, to be rated as less popular than their peers, and to have fewer friends than other children (Yude, Goodman, & McConachie, 1998).

A key strategy for schools in maximising a safe, supportive environment for all children and students is an effective peer support program. Components include:

- An educative, whole school approach with curriculum links for all children
- Voluntary child / student involvement, particularly in peer support programs
- Adequate resourcing and school structures that enable teacher facilitation
- Age appropriate training and ongoing support for children and their buddies
- Effective planning, problem solving and evaluation by committed staff
- Optimal age difference between buddies to ensure this approach is developmentally appropriate, safe and successful for all participants.

No doubt, schools could provide their own additional strategies for successful peer support programs.

Prior to implementation, schools are encouraged to consider potential risks to assist successful implementation of peer support programs.

- How will the school ensure all members of the community uphold their social responsibility to maintain a safe, supportive school environment?
- What do schools need to do to minimise the risk of harm in a child protection sense, between peers, particularly the most vulnerable? What additional strategies are needed?
- What do young people need to know about their buddies, information disclosures or potentially risky behaviours? To whom do they report? How is this monitored?
- How do schools address the risk of “burn out” for peers and their buddies, given the nature of complexities around children who are likely to benefit from participating in such programs?
- What is the role of teaching staff and school service officers in supervision?
- How do schools address their duty of care responsibilities in relation to peer support programs? It is unreasonable to expect or place young people in situations where risks are known. This is a staff member’s duty of care and not one we can give away to students.
- How do we ensure adequate training so buddies act as enablers, rather than ‘taking over’ and doing for their buddy? How is this monitored?

Schools are encouraged to consider the type and purpose of each peer support program to best meet the needs of all children and students and targeted individuals. No single approach or program will suit all DECS school communities so local decisions are required to ensure success in meeting the needs of children and students through peer support programs.

Matthew Chapman
Policy Advisor – Student Behaviour Management
Department of Education and Children’s Services
Ph: 8226 1029

BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN SPECIAL CLASS

Good relationships should be at the heart of everything that a school does, and are essential to allow for effective teaching and learning to take place. At Para Hills Primary School the building of positive relationships is a high priority; the staff identified that conflict during playtime led to the unnecessary misuse and loss of learning time. The staff are also aware that it takes learners a long time to ‘let go’ of issues and this usually leads to layering incidences that can result in revenge, which further complicates matters.

The staff at Para Hills Primary School received training by Debbie Laycock on the concept of Restorative Justice; this was very exciting, but I realised that the language may be a barrier to special needs students. In society it is assumed that good behaviour is rewarded and unacceptable behaviour is punished. However, Restorative Justice is a focus on the repairing of relationships rather than focussing on the blame and shifts the emphasis from managing behaviour to focussing on building, nurturing and repairing relationships. After Debbie had an informal session with my class, I decided to implement the concept of Restorative Justice.

continued
Where did I start?
To implement Restorative Justice in a special education classroom the key issue was the likelihood that students would struggle to understand the different concepts and lacked skills in effective communication. Using the program ‘Writing with Symbols’ the key questions needed for the restorative process were ‘translated’ into simple pictures, which made it easier for students to understand.

Questions to be asked to students post conflict:

What do I need when I’ve been harmed?
- An apology
- An empathetic listener
- The other person to understand what has upset me
- To be respected
- To be allowed to have emotion
- Support and positive reinforcement
- Reassurance it won’t happen again
- To move on.

What do I need when I have harmed someone else?
- To apologise and mean it
- To talk to someone
- Time to put things right
- To make it up to them
- A chance to explain to the other person about myself
- To feel better about it and about myself
- To be forgiven
- To reassure them/myself it won’t happen again
- To get back on friendly terms.

Prior to introducing restorative practice into the classroom, students responded to situations of conflict with ‘it’s not fair’, ‘it wasn’t my fault’, ‘they wouldn’t listen to me’, ‘she’s always getting me into trouble’, ‘we were only joking’ and ‘they are lying’. These responses were the result of layers of previous unresolved conflict and the inability to understand the perspective of others. Restorative practice has improved classroom relationships and conflict is resolved through statements such as, ‘I am sorry’, ‘I understand’, ‘I make my own choice’, ‘bullying is not a game’ and ‘I don’t lie anymore as people value the truth’. Restorative Justice does not remove the element of the initial conflict, but allows students and teachers to focus on repairing relationships.

Class Meetings and Daily Morning Talks
Class meetings were introduced after every recess and lunch and continued with daily morning talks. The meetings became part of our daily routine and the learners became very familiar with sharing. The students were taught the most important emotions (happy, sad, angry, frustrated) through visual flash cards that were practiced daily during meetings. Each student is given the opportunity to share what he or she did during playtime, before and after school. As time progressed each student’s confidence in being able to share his or her thoughts and emotions increased. As the students began to deal better with their emotions, the relationships between fellow students improved. Discussion on how individual learners felt and resolved incidents became a positive item on our daily program. I soon realised that previously students did not have the relationship skills or time to deal with their emotions in response to incidents, which led to negative outcomes such as unresolved conflict.

Creative Expression
Learners also had the opportunity to work through incidents using role-play or the use of puppets to portray emotions such as anger or happiness. Learners could photograph and video each other to document emotions felt throughout a specific incident. In groups or individually we shared and discussed the photographs and videos.

‘Catastrophe Scale’
The ‘Catastrophe Scale’ was clearly and simply taught to the learners so that they would have the skills to apply it during a variety of situations. The ‘Catastrophe Scale’ taught the learners to place incidents that happened to them in perspective. Soon learners realised that losing a pencil will be low on the scale compared to someone who lost a loved one. This assisted students to work through their thoughts and emotions during an incident, as they would be able to relatively place it on the ‘Catastrophe Scale’.

The Five Keys Of Success
The Five Keys of Success (Persistence, Resilience, Confidence, Getting Along, Organisation) is an essential tool that is used in the classroom in our daily routine. The Five Keys of Success were introduced and it soon became evident that it was working; I was observing my students referring to the various Keys of Success in their interactions. For example, at a math station I overheard Jasmin encouraging Robert to be persistent with solving a problem when she said: “ Keep trying Robert, you can do it!” When Beth refuses to unpack her bag in the morning fellow students will urge her on, saying: “Beth use your organisation key” and as this was coming from her peers Beth would unpack her bag.
Wheel of Choice
The Wheel of Choice is a tool to allow students to realise the variety of reactions they could have as a result of a situation. For example, they can either walk away, tell an adult, count to ten, go to a ‘cool down spot’, ask them to stop or go back to the class. The effectiveness of the Wheel of Choice increased when the students became involved in activities such as role-play that helped them practise the skills and solutions involved in the Wheel of Choice. The learners gained a deeper understanding of the potential of different choices they could make in response to conflict. The Wheel of Choice empowers the individual to make the right decision when facing difficult situations. These are important life skills that will help learners for the rest of their lives to help improve relationships and positively resolve conflict with others.

Class Values
As a class we mutually agreed on and discussed three class values: (1) Respect, (2) Honesty, and (3) Always try your best. This allowed students to focus on three values and held each other and themselves accountable. We regularly revisit our class values and discuss them according to the Y-Chart. The Y-chart demonstrated simply to the students how our class values look, feel and sound. For example: Respect, looks like one person talking at a time, feels like being valued or listened to, and sounds like one person talking at a time.

Building positive relationships in a special class can be a rewarding and worthwhile effort as it allows effective teaching and learning to take place. Restorative Justice is a central concept to building positive relationships as it focuses on repairing positive relationships. Other tools and strategies can be implemented to assist restorative practice, such as the Wheel of Choice, the Catastrophe Scale and the Five Keys of Success. As a result of the above practices there are now minimal time outs, suspension and office sit outs. This is because students are now able articulate their feelings, problem solve and build positive relationships with fellow students and teachers.

Martha Botha
Para Hills Primary School
Ph: 82642033

---

You were the one who made things different, you were the one who took me in.
You were the one thing I could count on, above all, you were my friend.

---

**William Light Peer Mentor Program at Ashford Special School**

Setting up a new initiative
In my role in the UK over the past 8 years I was responsible for setting up and administering a number of Peer Mentor programs linking special, junior/primary and secondary schools. The result was that all the schools established positive links that enabled secondary school students to undertake meaningful and challenging work placements and have volunteering opportunities which before this time were not on offer to them. At Ashford Special School a similar program was embarked on, albeit on a much smaller scale. My specialty is Human Movement and Physical Education and I have always used this subject area to establish the link between schools; I therefore decided put in place a similar program here in Australia. Establishing the new initiative in the UK gave me considerable experience to be able to set up the program at Ashford, and to ensure it becomes embedded in the fabric of the schools involved. It was essential during the establishment process to have all interested parties onboard to develop a common goal and a shared understanding.

At Ashford, when planning and teaching inclusive Human Movement/Health and PE lessons, the aim is for all students to be engaged all of the time with their classmates. The need for extra support in lessons was obvious and the close proximity of William Light R-12 school led to the conclusion that this was the best route to find our volunteers. A meeting was set up between principals and senior management staff from both schools. A number of students interested in volunteering to support students were then identified and training sessions were planned. The training was delivered at the secondary school site with a different focus each week aimed at preparing students for their volunteer work. Once the training occurred, the students were expected to take up a volunteer post alongside a teacher, once a week for approximately 10 weeks at Ashford.

**The William Light Peer Mentor Program**
The William Light Peer Mentor Program, established over the past 2 years, has been instrumental in excess of 200 senior students having opportunities to develop their skills working alongside students in a special school setting. Primarily it was seen as an opportunity to meet the needs of both schools; Ashford needed extra support to deliver inclusive PE/Health lessons and William Light needed placements for their year 10 students to complete their SACE/work experience requirements.
It soon became obvious that this type of program had more to offer. There is now a program which is built into the William Light students Personal Learning Plan (PLP)/SACE requirements, jointly assessed by the principal and PE/Health teacher from Ashford alongside their William Light counterparts. Students are required to complete a volunteer log book to track their hours and they see the program as a fantastic opportunity to develop their skills and provide a very worthwhile community service working with less able peers. Students also obtain SACE credits for the training undertaken prior to starting their volunteer work.

Development of Whole School Levels of Moral and Social Behaviour

Staff may believe that bullying occurs in response to boredom on the part of some children who are particularly intolerant of low levels of stimulation. “Children with little to do during their playtime may resort to seeking adventure through various forms of illicit play – for example, fighting, teasing and annoying other children” (Evans, 1989). It would follow then that bullying can be reduced by creating a more stimulating and interesting environment for children both within and outside the classroom. The Peer Mentor Program outlined here has been developed with a teaching environment that is not only more stimulating and fun but also more students are engaged for longer periods in high quality learning.

Developing opportunities for students to become Peer Mentors not only develops a strong moral code in their school but also gives the mentors, after training, opportunities to become more rounded individuals and to gain invaluable skills which to date have been beyond their grasp. Whole school appreciation and ownership of the program soon becomes established.

Schools develop improved learning environments as staff see the bigger picture as the Peer Mentors begin to demonstrate empathy, tolerance and increased understanding and the younger students benefit greatly from the transformation of their learning environment.

The William Light/Ashford Peer Mentor Program has been developed to provide for the needs of two very different groups of students. Both benefit greatly from the program but it is only with specific planning, training and implementation that has been successful. The teaching of the PE/Health curriculum and engaging students in explicit play and physical activity has been a major development achieved through the Peer Mentor Program. The support of the Peer Mentors has resulted in more vibrant environment more conducive to learning with the Peer Mentors beginning to demonstrate outstanding skills. Alongside this the students at Ashford Special School are now engaging in play that has not been observed before.

The basis of the program is open to year 9/10/11 students who express an interest in becoming a Peer Mentor. After an initial period of familiarisation from the Ashford teacher, this fully inclusive program which is not governed by academic ability, sometimes attracts students whom staff would not envisage having the necessary skills or interest in assisting others. Students simply have to express an interest in taking part. All Peer Mentors have to attend training in lesson time at their school site and once this training has been undertaken they can start to support the students in their target school.

Training delivered is on-going and regular feedback is given to the Peer Mentors as time progresses.

The benefits of the Peer Mentor Program include:

- Developing leadership skills in the secondary aged students.
- Providing additional support for curriculum lessons.
- Providing additional support for lunchtime and recess periods.
- Giving the Peer Mentors opportunities to work with younger students to promote social justice across the two sites.
- Providing the younger students opportunities to build friendships and to play with others of the same age range outside of their school friendships for the first time. Coupled with this the special school students have age appropriate role models for the very first time in the school environment.
- Developing a PE/Health curriculum not driven by staffing challenges and more driven by the needs of the students to have opportunities to experiment in this area of learning.
- Establishing strong links between two separate schools who realise the long term benefits of such a program.

Only your real friends will tell you when your face is dirty

Tenzin Gyatsom
• Reducing opportunities for errant behaviour and bullying.

• Giving less academic secondary aged students opportunities to succeed and to even develop a career pathway which up to this point had not been identified.

• Establishing an obvious venue for future volunteering work and a realistic and relevant placement opportunity for many secondary students.

• Providing a relevant opportunity for secondary students to develop their SACE and in particular Personal Learning Plan (PLP) requirements.

Please contact me for further information.

Andrew Delaney
Ashford Special School
Ph: 08 8293 3779

My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me

Henry Ford

DOES IT MATTER THAT I HAVE FRIENDS AND CAN SHARE MY FEELINGS?

‘Respectful relationships are foundational’ is one of the guiding tenants of the KidsMatter Primary Initiative, which provides schools with proven methods, tools and support to address questions like the one titling this article that are so important in nurturing happy, balanced kids. KidsMatter is the Australian mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative. As an intervention, KidsMatter acts to make the relationship been education and health explicit, by providing an educative framework to promote positive relationships and wellbeing, which further facilitates a cycle of improved educational and health outcomes for children. KidsMatter involves a whole-school systemic approach structured around a four-component framework, as Figure 1 captures.

However, because KidsMatter uses a whole-school approach, it does not specifically focus on students with a disability, even though they are a known group at greatest risk of mental health problems.

Mental Health and Disability

It is widely acknowledged that living with any type of disability can contribute to the development of mental health difficulties because of adverse individual and environmental conditions associated with disabilities.
An evaluation into KidsMatter Primary and students with a disability (Dix et al., 2010) found that children without a disability had a 1 in 8 chance of having mental health difficulties (i.e. being in the abnormal range according to Goodman’s (2005) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire), children with one identified disability had a 1 in 3 chance, while children with multiple disabilities had a 1 in 2 chance of having mental health difficulties. Also in 2010, the evaluation of KidsMatter Early Childhood commenced with the collection of similar data from parents about their child in the age range of 1 to 5 years. Figure 2 brings together this data with available parent data collected mid-2007 during the start-up of the KidsMatter Primary. Not only does it suggest that the co-morbidity of disability with mental health difficulties exists in young children, but that the prevalence of these difficulties increases with age.

More importantly, it emphasises the importance of early intervention and working directly with children at a young age. This notion was captured in the reflections of a primary school Principal about the impact of KidsMatter in their school

“I think it’s probably had a bigger impact in the early years because of the way that the Prep and Grade 1/2 teachers have tended to say “look we’ll do this … a unit on friends … so they do … everything’s about friends … and at that age they’re so enthusiastic and impressionable that they really do have an immersion in how important it is to be a friend.”

The other point made by this Principal was the importance of friendship.

KidsMatter and relationships
The target areas in the first two KidsMatter Framework components focus on respectful relationships, belonging and inclusion, and on developing children’s social and emotional skills.

Within these components, schools are encouraged to develop strategies and identify programs to achieve the targets, as was the case for this KidsMatter School Principal. “having the same program – the “Bounce Back” program as our core program … has given us something that we can talk as a staff that we’re all going to do the bit on bullying or the bit on friendship, so that we can be consistent. We’ve tried to do that as a sort of school-wide thing to develop a common understanding and for teachers to support each other.”

Even more telling were the views of students, interviewed as part of the evaluation of KidsMatter Primary. Their comments focused on ways of building positive relationships and their capacity to talk about their social and emotional development, mainly due to the use of these types of programs as part of KidsMatter implementation.

“I only used to have one or two friends….I never used to be very good at making friends…until this year…because I can express my feelings and stuff…so I have made loads more friends. I feel a lot more comfortable coming to school in the morning knowing that I am going to have fun at lunch and recess.”

“Last term I learnt …like you should rest…not always take it out on something or anyone…just try and rest it…just like stand there, count to three…take a deep breath and clam down…then go and have fun and play and forget about it.”

“We say it’s alright to feel sad sometimes and if you do feel sad you know you’ve always got your friends there to help you and cheer you up.”

Figure 2. Co-morbidity of children’s mental health and disability in the KidsMatter Early Childhood and Primary samples
The KidsMatter website (see below) provides a review of over 70 programs, the following of which have been identified for promoting relationship skills:

- Aussie Optimism
- Bounce Back
- Friendly Kids, Friendly Classrooms
- Friendly Schools and Families
- Can Problem Solve
- Passport Program
- PATHS Curriculum
- Peer Mediation
- Program Achieve
- Second Step
- Skills for Growing
- Social Decision Making & Social Problem Solving
- Steps to Respect

In addition to the Programs Guide, the KidsMatter site also provides resources, under Component 1 and Component 4, that specifically support children with additional needs, as Table 1 summarises below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children with:</th>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Parent Info</th>
<th>Suggestions for Parent</th>
<th>Suggestions for Teachers</th>
<th>Other Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional needs and mental health problems</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Supporting kids with AN</td>
<td>Children with AN</td>
<td>Children with AN</td>
<td>Additional needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</td>
<td>How it affects children</td>
<td>Why can’t Jason sit still?</td>
<td>Assisting children</td>
<td>Assisting children</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety problems</td>
<td>How it affects children</td>
<td>When will Sara stop worrying</td>
<td>Assisting children</td>
<td>Assisting children</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>How it affects children</td>
<td>What’s Making Dan moody?</td>
<td>Assisting children</td>
<td>Assisting children</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious behaviour problems</td>
<td>How it affects children</td>
<td>Sam is on a short fuse</td>
<td>Assisting children</td>
<td>Assisting children</td>
<td>Serious behaviour problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
<td>How it affects children</td>
<td>Ash is on his own track</td>
<td>Assisting children</td>
<td>Assisting children</td>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These KidsMatter resources are available from:
www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/programs-guide
www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/resources/information-resources/component-1-a-positive-school-community-resources/
www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/resources/information-resources/component-4-early-intervention-for-students-resources/

KidsMatter was designed to improve mental health and wellbeing and to reduce mental health difficulties for all children. Based on the evidence provided from the national evaluation, positive changes did occur and were consistent with the purpose of KidsMatter in its mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention strategies (Slee et al., 2009). Importantly, there were practically significant improvements in mental health and wellbeing for children with a disability, attributable to the positive impact of KidsMatter (Dix et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, successfully including children with a disability and those with mental health difficulties in mainstream pre-schools and primary schools is a significant challenge faced by staff and teachers, most with insufficient support or training.

To this challenge, KidsMatter may offer solutions, with its central belief that ‘respectful relationships are foundational’ underpinning its resources and professional learning. KidsMatter seems very well placed to assist in supporting the additional needs of children with a disability.

Table 1. KidsMatter resources for children with additional needs
At the heart of KidsMatter is a model of inclusivity such that all children with additional needs, including those with mental health difficulties, are given the best possible opportunity to form relationships and learn as part of a coherent school-wide program. Clearly, it does matter that all children have the opportunity to have friends and can share their feelings. Realising the potential and acting upon it at a national level, is now the greatest challenge.

“I think our teachers have come to accept that if they go back a step and look at their relationship with the kids ... and they understand and respect each other, then your classroom environment is a much better one in terms of learning. The kids are often much more willing and ready to learn as a result of being comfortable in the class ... So yeah, I think KidsMatter has made a big difference." Principal

References

Author Bio
Dr Katherine Dix is a researcher in the Flinders Centre for Student Wellbeing and Prevention of Violence. She project managed and was chief analyst of the KidsMatter Primary and Early Childhood evaluations and is currently Senior Research Officer at Principals Australia.

Dr Katherine Dix
School of Education, Flinders University
katherine.dix@flinders.edu.au

FRAMEWORK FOR SETTING UP BUDDY PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

“Buddy program” is a generic term that is used to describe peer networks (Smith Myles, 2011) that are often found in schools. Buddy programs may include informal and formal programs such as:

- Circle of friends
- Lunch Bunch
- Big Brother/ Big Sister Program
- Book Clubs
- Lego Club
- Mentor Programs
- Ashford/William Light Peer Mentor Program

The premise of buddy programs is that support is offered by peers. Slee (2011) defined the varying purpose of buddy programs in the following categories:

- friendship only
- mentoring
- friendship and mentoring
- friendship and tutoring

In schools there are various buddy programs that operate in a range of ways. For example, it may be that a buddy is another student in the same class, or year level, or it may be older students supporting younger students. Buddies may support peers in class for specific lessons or activities, and/or during recess/ lunch breaks.

Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) typically have difficulty navigating the unwritten rules, also referred to as the “hidden curriculum” (Smith Myles, Trautman & Schelven, 2004) that relates to the skills and behaviour associated with effective social interaction and relationships. People with ASD often need to be explicitly taught the skills that many others seem to instinctively know and understand. There are a large variety of autobiographical accounts written by individuals with ASD who highlight the difficulties associated with trying to understand the “neuro-typical” world and associated anxiety that relationships, particularly with peers can cause.

Recess and lunch breaks are often cited by teachers, parents and students with ASD as a critical time, due to the unstructured nature and difficulty understanding the rules associated with play and peer relationships. Buddy programs can be useful in providing support and a level of structure in key times such as break times. However, it also needs to be acknowledged that this may not be appropriate for all students with ASD and careful consideration needs to guide the decision to proceed with developing a buddy program or not. Sansosti, Powell-Smith and Cowan (2010) explain that “the simple act of purchasing programs, creating groups, and conducting lessons, in and of itself, is no guarantee that an individual (or group of students) with ASD will learn and demonstrate social skills” (2010, p. 133).

It is therefore important to assess students’ needs on a case by case situation to determine if a peer support or buddy program would be meaningful and positive for the student with an ASD.
Framework for setting up buddy program

The table below, has been adapted from Sansosti, Powell-Smith and Cowan (2010, p. 142) and outlines six steps to set up an effective peer buddy program for supporting students with ASD:

- Establish importance within site
- Notify parents
- Recruit peer buddies
- Conduct orientation
- Set up the program
- Evaluate the program

Within each step are a range of factors. Additional columns have been added for staff to consider how each step relates to their site and who is responsible.

Particular attention needs to be made in relation to the selection and orientation of buddies about ASD. Peer buddies "should be selected on their social maturity, willingness to help and patience. They should be given clear guidelines about what to do for the student with ASD and instructed to ask for help when they are confused about what to do. Training could be provided in a lunch time club ….peer mentor systems work better when at least three typical peers are used, either in a rotating system, or with different tasks" (Fein and Dunn 2007, p. 138). This is an important factor to consider.

A resource that is highly recommended is the “Peer Awareness Program for teachers of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder” that was developed by Autism SA for use in DECS sites and can be accessed at DECS ssonet. The resource consists of a PowerPoint presentation and associated information and resources about ASD for teachers to use with their classes. It could be also be used with small groups of students who may become buddies for students with ASD. There are three different packages targeting different age groups starting at year 2 level through to secondary level.

- Lower Primary, years 2-4
- Upper Primary, years 5-7
- Secondary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Description/ Strategies</th>
<th>At our site this means?</th>
<th>Who is responsible?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish importance within site</td>
<td>Discuss the importance and rationale for creating a peer buddy system for students with ASD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notify parents</td>
<td>Meet with school leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talk with teachers individually regarding the need for a peer buddy program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present information on peer buddy programs at a staff meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit peer buddies</td>
<td>Provide information in the letter regarding the reciprocal benefits of peer buddy programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Orientation</td>
<td>Include a permission slip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruit typically developing peers to be peer buddies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employ socio-metrics and/ or teacher nomination to recruit socially competent peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify volunteers to assist with peer buddy program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up the program</td>
<td>Train peer buddies on expectations for participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate the program</td>
<td>Discuss ASD with typically developing peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Include the concept of “people first” language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide detailed information regarding activities in the peer buddy program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Share positive examples of productive lives of people with ASD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model what you want to see</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify locations and times when peer buddies will be used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Select environments that both peers regularly access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Define and establish purposeful opportunities for interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examine the effectiveness of the peer buddy program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct feedback sessions with typical peers and individuals with ASD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meet with other teachers to share information/ observations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan a parent night for sharing information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continued
The package also lists things to consider before running the peer awareness presentation, such as seeking parent permission as well as that of the child with ASD. Feedback from a number of DECS schools has indicated that the resource is very positive and can be used to also support the further development of buddy programs within the school.

**Resources**

There are a range of other programs that may also be useful:

- The National Positive Partnerships program which is part of the National “Helping Children with Autism” program as online modules [www.autismtraining.com.au](http://www.autismtraining.com.au) that are useful for parents and professionals and could also be incorporated into the buddy orientation program, in particular the “making friends” and the “bullying” modules. A brief description of each module is below:

  - Making Friends: This module will help you to understand the reasons why making friends is difficult for children with ASDs. It provides a range of practical strategies, resources and additional sources of information to support children with ASDs to establish and maintain friendships.

  - Bullying: This module will help you support children with ASDs if they are experiencing bullying. It defines bullying and its common tell-tale signs, as well as some proactive and reactive strategies you can use to support the child

- Autism SA Peer Awareness Program (3 packages):
  - Program for teachers of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Lower Primary, years 2-4 (Autism SA, 2011 A)
  - Program for teachers of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Upper Primary, years 5-7 (Autism SA 2011C).


- Kids Matter [http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au) has two components: Australian Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative and the Australian primary Schools Mental Health Initiative. It is a federal program

- Mind Matters is a program to support secondary school groups “Students Supporting Students” training [http://mmplus.agca.com.au/](http://mmplus.agca.com.au/)

- Helping answer needs by developing specials in autism (HANDS in Autism) has an online peer module [http://www.handsinautism.org/peertraining.html](http://www.handsinautism.org/peertraining.html).

**References**


Vanessa Alexander
DECS Autism Project Officer
Ph 82260546
The Telstra Foundation iModeling™ ProjectStageOne is a social development project funded by the Telstra Foundation over three years since 2009, and run by Autism SA in Adelaide, South Australia.

The iModeling™ Project runs four social development groups each year for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders aged 8-15, including one group for children with autism and an intellectual disability. The aim of the project is to use video based interventions and information technologies to teach socio-communicative skills and self-protective behaviours in a group setting, with a focus on improved retention and generalisation of learned skills over time.

The Project was conceived in 2008 after a gap in social development services for young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder 1ers was identified. Video modeling had been successfully used to teach social skills to people with developmental disabilities for a number of years, but had not been used within social development group settings. The iModeling concept was an innovative concept designed to combine video modeling, information technologies, social skills programming and parent support within one group-based service model.

Video Modeling – Research

Video modeling is using video to teach skills and is also referred to as VBI, or Video Based Interventions. There are different kinds of video modeling: video modeling (VM) and video self-modeling (VSM), and these are broken down again into several methodologies. Video modeling can comprise of video self-modeling, peer modeling, or a combination of both. For the sake of simplicity, we will be referring to video based interventions, video modeling and video self-modeling by the single term ‘Video Modeling’, and the abbreviation VM.

Video modeling has been used to teach skills to people with developmental disabilities since the 1970s, however it is not the only use of the methodology. VM has been used to improve the skills of sportsmen and women, as a critical tool for public speakers, and to teach academic skills. The strategy has been shown to be an effective strategy for teaching skills to children with ASD (Kroeger et al., 2007, 809). Several studies have shown results for using VM to teach various social skills or play skills to children with ASD either in single subject studies or in small group settings (Bellini et al., 2009; Kroeger et al., 2007). In both single subject or small group settings, VM has shown effectiveness in teaching a myriad of skills, from play skills, to compliment giving, spelling and literacy skills, to fitness skills for adults (Buggey, 2009). Compared to live modeling, VM is shown to result in faster uptake of skills (Kroeger et al., 2007, 809), and improve rates of generalisation and maintenance (Bidwell and Rehfeldt, 2004, 264).

The advantages of Video Modeling are many: increased efficiency of skills instruction and acquisition, improved treatment fidelity, reduced need for prompting and prompt reduction strategies, and improved maintenance and generalisation of learned skills (Bidwell and Rehfeldt, 2004, 264).

Methodology:

The iModeling Project utilises two VM methods, feed-forward and positive self-review.

Feed-forward is used to teach targeted skills to people on the autism spectrum. The child can be filmed demonstrating a target behaviour over an extended period of time, and the tape edited to show only the targeted behaviour. Alternatively, the child can participate in a role play with another person, demonstrating the targeted behaviour. A role play can show a person or a peer acting out the desired skill even when they are not yet proficient in that skill (Buggey, 2007). Typically, feed-forward is used to teach a skill that is above the current skill-level of the learner (Delano, 2007, 34). Video is edited to show a skill being performed at a level of skill the learner has not yet attained. The film is then provided to the child to watch and learn from.

Positive self-review involves the learner watching footage of skills they have already learned: the aim is to reinforce a positive skill (Buggey, 2009, 3-4). The learner may be filmed engaging in a game, or having a conversation with others. Any undesirable behaviours (swearing, hitting) are edited out, and only the best examples of the targeted behaviour are retained. The learner is then given the edited footage to watch and learn (Buggey, 2009, 4).

The iModeling project teaches positive skills through video modeling. While VM can be used as a critical teaching tool, filming both positive and negative behaviours and guiding students to make judgments about their behaviour choices, VM is most often used as a positive behaviour strategy. Some children with autism can mimic behaviour, and when presented with negative behaviour, will not be able to self-critique, but will be able to mimic very well.

Bellini and McConnell argue that Video Modeling provides an intervention that is strength, rather than deficit, based. It focuses on what the young person is capable of achieving rather than reiterating what he or she lacks: “VSM deluges the child with visual representations of personal success” (Bellini and McConnell, 2010, 221):
This visual representation of successful performance has many benefits for students on the autism spectrum, including improved attention to instructional task, increased skill acquisition, enhanced performance of skills, improved self-efficacy, and, ultimately, the quality of their life. Bellini and McConnell, 2010, 227

Targeted Skill Development

The skills taught in the iModeling™ Project focus on socio-communication and self-protective behaviours. The following skills are taught:

- Socio-communication skills; getting to know you, personal space, saying hello to someone you don’t know, saying hello to someone you know, saying goodbye, respect, joining in a conversation, taking turns in talking and interrupting appropriately.
- Self-protective behaviours; ASD understanding, feelings, friendship, peer pressure, bullying, joking and mean teasing, sharing information, online safety, safe touch and consent.

The group for children with autism and an intellectual disability focuses on; saying hello, saying goodbye, saying thank-you, sharing, taking turns, following instructions, giving instructions, emotions, joining in games, personal space, appropriate touch and relaxation techniques.

As part of the program, parents are included in an informal support group model, and a formal three-week forum, which allows them to explore themes of bullying, privacy, and sexuality in a safe and supportive setting. Including parents within the model respects their role in teaching self-protective behaviours to children, and recognises their need for support and information.

The Disabilities Research Unit at the University of Adelaide independently evaluates the program using the Social Skills Rating Scale in 2009 and the Social Skills Improvement System in 2010 to assess the maintenance and generalisation of learned skills. Parents are interviewed at the start of the program (baseline), at the end of the program (post-intervention) and three months after the program has finished (follow-up) to assess the level of social skills of their child.

Research results from the pilot year, 2009, indicate that 75% of the children showed increases in their standard social skills scores from baseline to post-intervention. 48% of the children improved their social skill score from baseline to follow-up. This would suggest that maintenance of skills have occurred. 85% of the parents provided evidence of their child generalising the skills they learnt in the iModeling™ Program.

Research results from 2010 indicate that 75% of the children showed increases in their standard social skills scores from baseline to post-intervention. 57% of the children improved their social skill score from baseline to follow-up. This would suggest that maintenance of skills have occurred. 79% of the parents provided evidence of their child generalising the skills they learnt in the iModeling™ Program.

A decrease in problem behaviours of 61% was shown for 2010. Although decreasing problem behaviours was not a specific aim of the program, improvements in communication and social interaction could be seen to lead to this outcome.
Quotes from participating parents;

“Her current teachers have suggested that her work performance is better and that she now participates in classes and takes her turn….that she is a member in groups and will express herself”.

“Yes his report and the skills he demonstrated on the holiday camp support that he has generalised the skills he learnt in the program. He established a friendship group at the camp ground, we went to the same camp ground the previous two years and this never happened”.

“Well she is much better at starting conversations. She recently was very excited when she started a conversation with a girl she didn’t know at state swim, she saw that the girl had a ribbon in her hair that was their school ribbon and she asked her “do you go to (school name)?”. She was able to find a common interest like they taught them to do in the group. This is one example she was thrilled about and so was I”.

References


Merel Purmer and Amanda Tulloch-Hoskins
Autism SA
Phone: (08) 8379 6976
Today we accept that the social aspects of school are critically important and that student wellbeing is broader than successful academic learning. Social experiences are linked to mental health and victims of bullying can experience similar symptoms to those of sufferers of post traumatic stress (Bartak, Bottroff & Zeitzi 2006).

Children and adolescents with Asperger syndrome are known to struggle with peer relationships. It is well documented that friendships with older and younger people are often more successful for individuals with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), or alternatively the child with ASD may become more and more isolated (Jackson, 2002, Attwood, 2007). The majority of our schools group students by chronological age but unfortunately students with ASD can find they are out of sync socially with their peers.

It is helpful to understand why behaviour is different when assisting a student with ASD to build peer relationships. Below, a brief discussion of the latest research leads into a description of Relationships Australia SA, Living with Autism Team’s approach to helping students in mainstream schools develop peer connections.

NEUROANATOMY OF AUTISM

The field of neuroanatomy and neuropsychology has increased dramatically over the past decade; our understanding of how the brain works and the physical differences associated with different processing styles is forever growing and changing. Research is supporting evidence of variations in brain growth patterns and pruning processes for individuals with ASD (Herbert 2011, Minshew et al 2008). The equipment we have available to explore the neurobiological events during clinical tests shows us that individuals with ASD appear to use different areas of their brain to process social experiences from that of their neurotypical chronological peer group (Herbert 2011).

COGNITIVE THEORIES

With this increase in understanding, an exploration of cognitive theories associated with ASD is also growing, in particular Theory of Mind, Executive Functioning and Central Coherence (Attwood 2007, Henry & Smith-Miles 2007). Today these three theories are regularly discussed in connection with the behaviours commonly associated with ASD. Some light can be shed on the social difficulties experienced by students with ASD by looking further into these three theories.

Theory of Mind

Over our lifetime we develop an understanding of others’ thoughts, beliefs, preferences, likes and dislikes. For example we can have a good guess at how those close to us might react to particular experiences i.e. a sad movie or maybe a thriller. We have the ability to view the world through the eyes of another. This skill begins developing around 3 years of age and gradually matures.

By school age most students have begun the journey of understanding others. Younger siblings develop this skill faster than older siblings and girls usually develop the skill faster than boys. For most children with ASD the skill is significantly delayed with some only reaching the skill level of a 6 to 7 year old by late adolescent years (Holyroyd & Baron-Cohen 1993).

Executive Functioning

Executive functioning refers to the coordination of our thinking and working memory. This coordination results in a specific set of skills; which includes the ability to inhibit behaviour, control our emotions, shift attention, and to plan and organise ourselves. There appears to be a significant difference between students with ASD and their peers in executive functioning skills (Aspy & Gossman 2007). Emotional responses of students with ASD are often described as an under or over reaction to a particular event. Teachers describe difficulty in moving the child from one task to the next or triggering a stress reaction from the student if the timetable is changed.

Central Coherence

Central coherence refers to an ability to notice detail over and above the broader meaning (Aspy & Gossman 2007, Attwood 2007). Students may attend to the actual meaning of individual words without considering the context when the words are grouped together (literal interpretation) i.e. ‘can I give you a hand with that?’ doesn’t mean I’m going to take my hand off and give it to you, it means can I help you. Central coherence issues can create havoc when attempting to follow conversations or block out sensory detail that isn’t important (noise in the background, pictures hanging from the ceiling) to the task at hand. Differences in central coherence are thought to be the reason for the impressive memory skills displayed by some students with ASD and may explain savant talents in individuals with an intellectual disability and autism.

Combined Theories

Play is fraught with difficulties for students with ASD. Successful cooperative play is dependent on the players’ ability to attend to the task, control emotions, give and take, wait, share, invite, negotiate, lose well and win well. These skills are often a mystery to the child with ASD because of the neurological differences they experience.
Peers watch the unusual behaviour; sometimes amused or sometimes fearful. Occasionally the child with ASD is seen as entertainment and the beginnings of bullying may develop, or the child can find him or herself more and more isolated with peers avoiding play with the child.

LIVING WITH AUTISM TEAM

The Living with Autism Team at Relationships Australia SA is particularly interested in how we can help students develop successful peer relationships. We know that peers of the same age are the least tolerant and so we have developed a series of activities to model, direct and assist play between peers and their classmates with ASD. The method is an integrated approach using a range of evidence based strategies, including: direct instruction, modeling, social stories and comic strip conversations. Each stage follows on from the next in the same day if possible and within the student’s school environment.

INTERVENTION PLANS

Withdrawn 1:1 play with a Developmental Educator

This first section of the support is a PROACTIVE component. This is about teaching new skills and identifying the difficulties. The latest Lego board games have proved a very useful tool for learning about social interactions; using the child’s skills in observing detail and interest in constructing with the small blocks. The games can be played quickly and offer the interaction and competition of cooperative play. The adult works through the game with the child, introducing cooperative skills. Puppets and comic strip conversations drawn on whiteboards or paper are used to provide the student with a visual example of cooperative play, offering ways of managing winning, losing, turn taking. The puppets are used as examples of successful and unsuccessful behaviour. The students use the puppets as peers and can use the puppets to play the game instead of the student, if playing directly is too fraught with difficulty. The student and adult become the puppeteers. Sometimes the puppet wins well and sometimes the puppet doesn’t. The student can direct the play identifying the problems, the right way and wrong way to play. Scenarios are acted out so the student can see the consequences of a behaviour choice that the puppet may have made. This type of play helps the child build an ‘inner-voice’ for managing emotions and beginning to predict and understand the interactions of others.

Providing incentives (stickers, edibles, token points for privileges) to maintain motivation for learning these difficult skills is often essential to keep the student on task.

Regulation skills for managing mood and emotions are also an important aspect of the 1:1 sessions. Desk work (board games) is interspersed with physical activity breaks such as chair push ups, fit ball exercises, crab walks. For students who experience significant difficulty with emotional control referral to an occupational therapist for a sensory diet can make a significant difference to some students. Although sensory processing difficulties are still mostly anecdotal there is some evidence based research building to support the therapy. More evidence is required for the Australian Government to support sensory processing as a recommended therapy in the Federal funded Helping Children with Autism program. However we have found it very useful in our practice, and the students enjoy the activities.

Withdrawn 1:3 play with Developmental Educator and peers

The next stage is to introduce peers to the desk games. The Developmental Educator is a member of the game. Again the puppets can be used if necessary or played without. The adult’s role becomes one of PREVENTION monitoring the mood of the game and interspersing with body breaks. Incidents that occur are defused or distracted and should be gently raised at the next 1:1 one session as a theme for the puppets or comic strip conversations. The peers are also supported in their play and the adult assists with social interpretation, modulating the speed of the game and repeated communication if necessary for the student with ASD.

Free play

The final aspect of the support is during free play. The adult either joins in an activity or engages the student during a recess or lunchtime in an organised activity that is motivating to other students. The adult’s role becomes one of mentoring, playing cooperatively alongside the students making suggestions and monitoring mood, applying preventative strategies if necessary and interpreting the communication and actions of the peers when needed. The aim is for successful play and the building of common experiences to assist in the development of friendships.

CONCLUSION

It is important to recognise that students with an autism spectrum disorder and their peers are continuously moving through new developmental stages. Students with ASD experience significant difficulty with social interactions and may spend significant periods of their school years out of sync with their peers’ developmental stages. For this reason schools must consider how to offer ongoing social supports for students with ASD in the mainstream settings. Greater levels of supervision in particular at recess and lunchtime play areas, alternative play areas, interest groups or organised activities can all assist in providing successful peer relationships.

continued
Training School Support Officers (Certificate III in Education Support)

Relationships Australia SA (RASA) is a registered training organisation (RTO). The combination of service provider and trainer gives the adult students an opportunity to learn directly from experienced staff working hands-on with students in mainstream schools. Currently Certificate III in Education Support (SSO training) is offered, with a focus on supporting students with ASD, learning difficulties and/or challenging behaviour.

Parent Courses

In October, Therapeutic Parenting courses will be offered for parents and extended family members. For further information on any of our services please call the Living with Autism program at Relationships Australia SA, 190 Port Rd, Hindmarsh, 8340 2022.

REFERENCES


Joanna Zeitz
Coordinator
Living with Autism Program
8340 2022

The Current Awareness

A review of the Current Awareness has been carried out to ensure Copyright regulations are met and the continuation of the publication is sustainable. The new format is included with this issue of the SERUpdate.

In this edition the contents page of all journals received by SERU this term are included. This will mean titles of all articles can be viewed. Originally only copies from a limited number of selected articles from some journals could be ordered. It is now possible to select articles to be copied from all journals.

The process for ordering copies of articles has not changed, but orders must now be submitted by Friday second week of the following term. A copy of the Current Awareness is also available on the SERU website under ‘Publications’ and the same timeline applies for ordering.

The Journal Collection is located in the reference room at SERU, and you are welcome to come in and read or copy articles.
I get by with a little help from my friends

John Lennon
Understandably much attention is given to the needs of children with disabilities at school, both in terms of curriculum but also social and emotional wellbeing. However, it is important that their brothers and sisters are considered as well, not only for the sake of their own wellbeing but also for the sake of the child with a disability.

Special needs in the family may not necessarily affect a sibling’s participation at school. For some, school can in fact provide respite from stresses at home. However for many siblings, school can be an additional source of stress. Issues for siblings can include:

- Difficulty finishing homework or homework being spoilt
- Tiredness or poor concentration
- Social difficulties; feeling isolated
- Teasing and bullying by other students
- Extra responsibilities for their brother or sister with a disability

Of course, some of these issues might be the product of other stresses or concerns but if a child has a brother or sister with disability, then consideration can and should be given to the support needs of a sibling.

Also, school staff may not know that a student has a brother or sister with special needs for the following reasons:

- The child with disability goes to another school
- Data collection by the school might not include details of other children in the family
- A sibling might choose not to reveal their family circumstance as they feel embarrassed and might be fearful of ‘disability by association’. They might also feel guilty about ‘complaining’.

Even when staff members are aware that a child is a sibling to a child with disability, the sibling may not show or express their concerns. They might receive a lot of ‘kudos’ from home and from others for being a ‘good’ sibling. Their identity might be largely framed by the idea that their needs are not as important as those of other people. It can be difficult to ask for help.

Sibling support

- Siblings need to be acknowledged within schools as being a group that may need extra support.
- **Specifically, siblings need**: Information about the special needs of their brother or sister
- Opportunities to express feelings, be listened to and understood
- To feel special themselves

- To feel competent and valued, but not be given too much responsibility
- Strategies to deal with difficult situations
- Social support; help to make connections with other children in general
- Contact with siblings in a similar situation

**Building relationships**

There are a number of school based approaches that can be used to support siblings. Further information can be found on the Siblings Australia website (http://www.siblingsaustralia.org.au/info_teachers.asp), but this article will focus on building relationships. Siblings may need help in making connections with other children; children in general, but also other siblings of children with disability. In addition, sometimes parents need assistance in supporting their children who are siblings.

**Connecting with other children**

Some siblings feel that their lives are quite different to their peers and this can cause difficulty for them. Some siblings learn inappropriate ways of interacting from their brother or sister with disability. This can add to any distance from peers. For example, one young girl had an older brother with autism. She had learnt a number of behaviours that had negative impacts on building relationships. Fortunately her parents recognised the need to socialise with other children and ensured she was able to attend a range of different activities. Of course, some parents have difficulty driving siblings to school or community activities such as sport or music. Siblings may not be able to bring other children home to play due to the demands or difficult behaviour of a child with disability.

Some siblings are teased or bullied. One little girl found that other children would not play with her as she had ‘disability germs’. Siblings can become upset at the teasing or bullying of their brother or sister or any other child with disability.

Siblings may spend much of their school time looking out for their brother or sister with disability, taking on responsibility for them and restricting their own opportunities for socialisation. All of these situations can add to the sense of isolation felt by siblings.

**Strategies for schools can include:**

- Promote social skills
- Assist in creating links between children
- Ensure strong bullying and harassment policies
- When a Negotiated Education Plan is developed for the child with disability, consider any impacts on the sibling(s)
- Keep information on community activities

**Sibling support**

- Siblings need to be acknowledged within schools as being a group that may need extra support.
- **Specifically, siblings need**: Information about the special needs of their brother or sister
- Opportunities to express feelings, be listened to and understood
- To feel special themselves
● Organise car-pooling for school activities, if it is difficult for parents to be involved
● Ensure a sibling does not take on too much responsibility for a brother or sister with disability

**Connecting with other siblings**
Siblings can benefit enormously by connecting with other siblings; sharing in fun activities, sharing experiences and learning how to manage the challenges. Siblings can feel less isolated through contact with other siblings who understand what they are going through.

Strategies can include:

● Collect data at entry which includes information about other family members
● Connect siblings to each other either informally or formally
● For example, two or more siblings might be able to be assigned to the same class and teachers can encourage them ‘getting to know’ each other
● Consider running a sibling peer support program. Siblings Australia has resources for its Sibworks program if schools have the capacity to run such a program. Siblings Australia also runs a recreational program for siblings
● Have details of community sibling support activities to give to families
● Keep a range of sibling related books in the school library for children to access

**Family connections**
Sometimes parents are so stretched practically and emotionally that it is easy to overlook the needs of siblings. Relationships may become strained as all family members try to protect each other.

Strategies can include:

● Keep a selection of books on sibling issues in the school library for parents to use, or other resources (for example Siblings Australia has developed a DVD for parents)
● Consider having Siblings Australia run a parent workshop for your community (or in combination with other schools) to help parents understand the issues for siblings and what they need to feel supported

Finally, individual teachers can make a big difference in the lives of siblings by building their own relationships with these children. Siblings can benefit from feeling someone is listening to them and understands what the child is experiencing. Teachers can watch out for any behaviour that might indicate stress, such as tiredness, being over-helpful, not connecting with other children. They can also advocate for these children amongst school personnel so that more people understand their need for support. Professional development in this area is also available through Siblings Australia, www.siblingsaustralia.org.au

Kate Strohm
Director, SIBLINGS AUSTRALIA
kate@siblingsaustralia.org.au

---

**TEACHING THE SKILLS FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SECONDARY YEARS FOR STUDENTS WITH DOWN SYNDROME**

Over the last 10 years, with the increase in medical knowledge and intervention, the life span of people with Down syndrome is now potentially 60 years or more. These will be the first people with to outlive their parents.

The impact of longevity for educators is that we need to increase our focus on teaching students independent life skills, leisure and recreation activities, and the social skills to establish and maintain friendships and relationships.

“They should be taught appropriate social behaviours and how to avoid socially unacceptable behaviours. They need instruction in social interaction, how to initiate contact with others and how to enjoy togetherness in a rewarding human relationship.” (Adolescents with Down Syndrome)

Down Syndrome SA has looked at the essential skills and knowledge that should be taught to enable students to have basic information in the areas of friendships, sexuality and protective behaviours during and after they leave school. The Right to Know program has been completed to the end of Primary schooling but due to lack of funds the secondary programs are incomplete (the grey units are not available)

As a result of our experience working with secondary students and adults through Down Syndrome SA’s Life Education and Leisure and Recreation programs, we have identified the following skills that need to be taught.
1. Who am I?

Students need to make an identity profile including:
- Date of birth, place of birth.
- Family tree.
- Features eg. eye colour, hair colour.
- Height, sizes of clothing, shoe sizes.
- Name of disability.
- Impact of disability - positives and negatives.
- Creating realistic pathways and dreams for the future.

Look at the suggestions in ‘All About Me’ in the Right to Know program for ideas you can adapt to your needs. Some teachers were surprised about how limited their students knowledge may be, eg. “How many fingers do you have?” Or “what colour are your eyes?”, brought some surprising answers.

Many students do not know about their disability, are ashamed of it, have no name or way of describing it, and have no idea of how this will impact on their life. Some state they wished it would go away. None of these responses are encouraging for good self esteem and mental health.

2. Friends – About others

Students need to live in the usual world and the disabled world. The usual world provides opportunities to be involved in their own and their family’s interests, learning new skills by imitating the actions of others. Their true friends will usually come from people with similar ability, interests and background.

Linking students to appropriate leisure and recreation activities, both usual and ‘special’, where they can interact and meet others, becomes increasingly important through the teenage years and on leaving school. For many students, this will need to be encouraged and networking links provided.

For students to make a conversation, you need a common interest.

An example is that we assume that students know the names of other students just by being with them, eg.

S. “I have a new boyfriend.”
T. “Who is it?”
S. “That one over there.”

---

"Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down." - Oprah Winfrey
Example 2

The student was isolated in the yard and was annoying other students. When parents were given information about what the other students were watching on TV, they then watched these age appropriate TV shows with their daughter, offering explanation as required. After a few weeks, their daughter was observed chatting to other students about these shows at lunch time. They shared a common interest.

Topics for discussion:
- What is a friend?
- Interviewing other students using prompt questions
- Teaching conversation skills: listening and responding appropriately, taking turns
- Understanding friendship rules eg no ‘put downs’
- Increasing ‘feelings’ vocabulary eg embarrassed, upset
- Activities you can do with friends eg coffee, movies, bowling, sleep-overs
- You can have more than one friend
- Use visual social stories that can be revisited

“The relative immobility of individuals with intellectual disabilities further restricts their opportunities to make a circle of friends, and explore and develop feelings about them. People with intellectual disabilities often name support workers and carers as their friends, rather than people similar to themselves” (Prof Roy Brown).

3. Relationships

You are my boy friend.
I am not!!
Yes you are. You are a boy and you are my friend.
A boyfriend is a friend with love.

Relationship issues and discussion:
- Friends first
- Mutual consent
- Public and private behaviour
- Separating fact and fantasy
- Finishing a relationship
- Dealing with rejection
- Social awareness and skills around a relationship. Eg When I contacted a family about a very public break up between a couple at a public venue, the family said they expected it because the couple had watched ‘home and away’ and acted out this program as their model of what a relationship meant.

4. Sexuality

The following topics need to be addressed:
- Sexual diversity
- Sexual safety – contraception, condoms, safe practices
- Love – mutual consent-genetic counselling
- The physical sexual act – foreplay, hygiene,
- Birth control
- Masturbation

We know that people with Down syndrome have the same range of sexual variations as in the general population and will need information around these differences. They may need to be referred to support groups to meet others with the same sexual preference, to receive support and friendship. Eg. After watching a TV program about gay people he told everyone he was gay. When questioned by a staff member he said “my best friends are S and R. They are boys. I am Gay”. “Rachel High” has desires. She doesn’t care for boys but thinks one day she’d like to settle down with another women”. “On the way to a mixed sex camp, F bought a condom from the vending machine at the airport. Staff checked the accommodation before leaving, and they found a banana with a condom on it under his bed”.

Summary

These topics need to addressed with all students. Check the Chid Protection Curriculum to see what you are mandated to teach. The manner of delivery and the way concepts are delivered need to be carefully considered and then shared with parents.

Resources
- Child Protection curriculum
- SERU
- SHINE
- Down Syndrome SA: Offers training in understanding Intellectual disability and the Right to Know program (Friendships, Sexuality and Protective Behaviours). Has a range of resources on loan to members eg Socially speaking, Socially speaking board game, Talkabout, sexuality dolls, DVDs – relationships, masturbation booklets.

Anne Squire
Manager Education Services
Down Syndrome SA Inc
Phone: (08) 8369 1122
SERU has recently purchased 2 new resources hopla Feels… and A House Full of Emotions. When added to ‘A Box Full of Feelings’ this completes the series which is designed to develop social emotional intelligence in children. These resources begin with ‘hopla Feels…designed for pre-school children, progresses to A Box Full of Feelings, designed for children 4-7 years and concludes with A House Full of Emotions, designed for children 8-11 years.

Many SERU clients have used A Box Full of Feelings with their students with very positive outcomes, so the addition of the other two levels of this resource should prove to be a valuable addition to the collection.

**hopla feels…**

This resource is the first level in the series and that can be used with students to support social-emotional development. Four little animals that children should readily engage with - Hopla the rabbit, Lola the cat, Onki the pig, and Nina the bear, introduce and help young students to explore, recognise and acknowledge the four basic emotions of happiness, fear, anger and sadness. By thoroughly exploring these feelings through hands-on play, using the considerable variety of resources provided, it is intended that students will explore their feelings, begin to empathise with others and read basic body language without becoming upset. These particular four emotions have been selected as they are considered the foundation of the more complex emotions that children will experience as they grow.

Contents: 4 cardboard pictures of hopla characters, 16 figurines, 4 masks, 8 bingo boards, 32 counters, 1 spinner board, 4 small boxes yellow, green, purple, orange, 12 storybooks, 12 x green, purple, yellow, orange emotional insert cards, 16 situation picture cards, 40 domino cards, 12 clear plastic card holders, 1 manual

**What our borrowers said:**

“excellent for all students and in particular ESL students”

“very helpful in assisting reserved students and students with a lack of trust become more comfortable in verbalising their emotions and becoming more trusting with adults”

“We used it as a 1 to 1 tool with students displaying behavioural issues as a result of crisis in their lives and as a group tool to act out situations”

“helpful in assisting Autistic students to identify and match emotions”
A Box Full of Feelings

The Box Full of Feelings, the second level in this series, is designed to support the social-emotional development of children aged approximately four to seven years. The set is built around the same four basic feelings that are explored in hopla feels…; happiness, fear, anger and sadness but on a deeper level. There are more than twenty open-ended activities included that are designed to assist children to remain or get in touch with their feelings, recognise emotions in themselves, accept them, name them and also to differentiate between them. It can also assist them to learn to take the perspective of others, empathise with perceptions and emotions of other people, to feel the impact of their actions and to realise that all people do not experience the same events in the same way. In other words they are beginning to develop and understand emotional intelligence.

Contents: 1 Professional’s Guide (42pp + 23blm’s), 4 posters (40 x 30cm), 64 situational pictures (11 x 11cm), 4 houses/ posting boxes, 15 finger dolls, 4 masks, 1 spinner, 1 laminated sheet and 1 CD.

A House Full of Emotions

A House Full of Emotions is the final and most sophisticated level in the series and is the sequel to A Box Full of Feelings. This level has been broadened in scope by increasing the number of emotions it explores but also by including a behavioural aspect, so that students come to realise that emotions and relationships are inevitably interwoven. In targeting 8 - 11 year olds, some of the more advanced feelings presented are loneliness, fright, shyness, shame, pride, love, panic, disappointment, fury, gratefulness, restlessness, jealousy, guilt, feeling safe and powerlessness.

A House Full of Emotions can assist children to learn about cause and effect, how to interpret verbal and non-verbal behaviour and how to use problem solving strategies within a social context. It also offers a variety of options when interacting with others.

Contents: 63 situational picture cards (11 x 11cm) each with a story and questions about the feeling depicted on the back; 10 large picture cards featuring animals in stories about different relationships and positive/negative emotions; 48 dominoes comprising of 4 sets of 12 cards that can arranged in a story sequence; board game featuring the animals, fan depicting and naming the 21 feelings; play houses including 10 animal pictures and 21 emotion pictures; a CD of emotive music; Instruction manual including photocopiable activity sheets.
As the Wellbeing Co-ordinator at Henley Beach Primary School I am always looking for resources to assist teaching social skills and emotional intelligence strategies. Two of the resources I have used are from the Be Cool Series, which include four films that teach children how to react in certain situations.

The first, Coping with TEASING is suitable for Middle Elementary Grades 3-5 (primary), and has three scenarios more suitable for younger children year 2-5. The other, Coping with BULLYING for Upper Elementary Grades 3-5, has 4 films; the first and last are suitable for middle and upper while the two middle scenarios are about peer pressure and include smoking and drinking, therefore suitable for year 6/7 and not for younger grades. Each CD comes in a large blue plastic container which includes notes for teachers.

The scenarios are realistic and believable and show one or two children in a difficult situation in which they need to make a decision. It then shows the outcome of their choices and outlines three reactions:

- COLD Reaction - freezing up and giving in and shows the negative consequences of this.
- HOT reaction - showing an angry and aggressive reaction to the people bullying or teasing (showing how this leads to more trouble was good for some children to see, particularly the ones who often get into trouble because of their temper).
- COOL reaction - this is taking a deep breath and being assertive and not too weak or too strong.

This is when strategies such as ignoring, making a joke, stating what you are going to do and walking away or getting help are shown. Tips include taking a deep breath to calm nerves, looking confident and in some cases looking straight ahead and avoiding eye contact.

The scenarios in the TEASING DVD included being teased and annoyed by older children and the tactic of ignoring was demonstrated. The second scene showed a child being teased at school and using a joke and distraction to divert teasing. This was a great tactic, but not shown well in the DVD. The third strategy was using an ‘I’ statement.

In the BULLYING DVD first scenario children are being bothered by bullies. They “Look the Look”, walking confidently past the bullies without giving eye contact. The film also suggests running off if annoyed by bullies. In the second scene, “Talk the Talk”, a girl is pressured by peers to skip school and to have a smoke. The Cool response shows how to stand up for yourself. Another peer pressure situation shows a boy insisting his friend have an alcoholic drink with him and again it shows how to stand up to the pressure. Feedback from a year 7 was that this wouldn’t happen, though the year 7 teacher and I thought it was a likely event in the next couple of years for some of the children. The last scene “Walk the Walk” showed how to deal with a bully by standing up and if necessary getting help. It also mentioned that the concept of “dobbing” helps bullies a great deal.

The DVD lends itself well to discussions and role plays. Showing the scenarios on a smart board is an engaging way to start a lesson. I created worksheets based on scenarios suggested in the accompanying book. I discovered when role playing the boys usually chose to enact a hot reaction so I took that choice away from them. Though somewhat corny at times, the stories do get the students thinking about their own reactions and why the cool response works. I look forward to seeing the other modules in the series.

Craig Johnston
Wellbeing Co-ordinator, Henley Beach Primary School
This book is one in the Get Real series. Using a modern magazine style format, each title in this series helps readers to understand why they feel as they do and aims to instil a sense of self worth and confidence.
See also 66.1160.01 Coping with friends
66.1130.01 School Survival

A Quest for Social Skills for Students with Autism or Asperger's. Cumpata, J. & Fell, S.  2010. 66.1453.01
Quest (questioning, understanding and exploring social skills and pragmatic language together) is a school based social skills program combining written instructions with games, activities and student interaction. It includes a unit on making friends and interacting with peers.

Ask & Answer Social Skills Game. Spielvogel, K.  2002. 66.1400.01
These games offer students opportunities to develop and improve their social skills.

Straight Talk - Card Game. Brikenshire, D.  66.0658.02
This game is designed for players to explore experiences, feelings and relationships.

Teaching social Skills in Early Childhood— Lets Talk About It. Howard, A.  1998. 25.0119.01
This book provides support for early childhood educators in identifying the lack of social skills in children and enhancing social development. It provides a theoretical context, an outline of the social skills required for effective interaction with others and comprehensive strategies for promoting social skills.

My Friend is Blind. Edwards, N.  2004. 60.0859.01.
This picture book, one in the My Friend series, aims to develop understanding and empathy in children about blindness. The book also provides factual information on blindness.
See also My Friend is Deaf
My Friend has ADHD
My Friend has Autism
My Friend has Down Syndrome
My Friend has Dyslexia
My Friend has Dyspraxia

Join In and Play. Meiers, C.  2004. 66.1380.01
One in the Learning to Get Along series, this book has full page coloured illustrations which provide visual cues to the simple text which teaches the basic skills of cooperation, making friends and being a friend.

DVD Stop and Think Friendship. Petersen, L.  2006. 66.0704.01
This package is part of the Stop Think Do series and is designed to teach learners the Stop Think Do Strategy as a way of helping them make and keep friends.

Personal relationships: Illustrated Colour Cards. Speechmark Publishing. 2002. 66.1166.01
This pack of coloured cards, depicting 28 different situations aims to help learners focus on personal relationships and ho to define and understand them. The cards explore how relationships develop, different kinds and levels of relationships.

Social Awareness Skills for Children. Csoti, M.  2001. 66.1081.01
This book is intended for professionals, parents and carers engaged in teaching learners communication and social skills. It is suitable for use with children aged approximately 7-16 years. It is a structured course.

Room 14 A Social Language Program. Wilson, C.  1993. 66.0506.01
This is a practical resource for building social language. It is designed to teach social growth, personal happiness and academic success. The lessons are divided into 5 units including making and keeping friends. It is designed for students both in both special and mainstream settings.

The Feelings Game. Berg. B.  1990. 66.0564.01
This is a program designed to help individuals develop rational evaluation of their emotions. It can be played with an individual and a leader or with groups. It is suitable for secondary students with supervision and can be adapted for use with younger children.

The Social Skills Picture Book; For High School and Beyond. Baker, J.  2006. 66.1343.01
This book uses a primarily visual strategy to teach social skills and assists learners to visualise the positive outcomes of performing a skill. The social skills demonstrated include peer conflicts, dating, employment and classroom situations.

The revised Circles program aims to teach people with disabilities concepts of personal space, social distance and social/sexual concepts. It teaches social distance and levels of intimacy through the use of 6 colour coded concentric circles and assists students to discriminate different degrees of intimacy and to adapt their behaviours accordingly.
See also 66.1455.02 Circles Level 2 - Intimacy & Relationships Social Distance

Socially Speaking: A Pragmatic Social Skills Programme for Primary Students. Schreder, A.  1996. 66.0667.01
This book is divided into sections entitled Lets Communicate, Lets be Friends and Lets Practise. The audience is students with mild to moderate learning disabilities. Each lesson has the same format and assessment sheets are included.
Can Do Dinosaurs. St Lukes innovative Resources. 2009. 66.1417.01
This set of cards is designed to help adults guide children to explore safety, personal worth, self reflection, responsibility for feelings, interpersonal relationships, resilience and manners through conversations.

Social Skills Activities for Special Children. Manrix, D. 1992. 66.0774.01
This book contains 142 ready to use lessons and blackline masters to help students become aware of acceptable social behaviour and to develop social skills.

More Than Words Program. Sussman, F. 19.0055.01
This resource is a step by step guide for parents/ caregivers and individuals working with preschool children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and other social communication difficulties. Practical ideas show how everyday activities can be turned into opportunities for promoting interaction and communication.

This resource addresses the needs of students in the primary school years, who display aggression, immaturity and/or withdrawal behaviours. The program is designed to develop competence in dealing with interpersonal conflicts, learning to use self control and contributing to a positive classroom atmosphere. See also 25.0108.01 Skillstreaming Early Childhood 25.0110.02 Skillstreaming the Adolescent

Stop Think Do for Social Skills training in Young People with Parent and Teacher Programs. Peterson, I. & Ganoni, A. 1992. 66.0705.01
This manual and supporting posters provide an intensive, developmental, systematic, social skills training program for children aged 15yrs, experiencing social difficulties and poor peer relationships. Concurrent training sessions are provided for the teachers/parents who will be involved in the program.

This book of text and activity blackline masters is designed to provide students with insights into the ways people communicate in social settings.

The Wrong Stone and A Pocket of Stones. Deal, R. 2004. 66.1043.01
This pack contains a picture book with coloured illustrations providing visual cues to the text. The story relates what happens when a wall is built using only perfect stones. It shows what its like to be different, to stand out, to feel unwanted and that the wrong stone knows. The stones represent a cross section of emotions and feelings.

Teaching Social Competence to Youth and Adults with Developmental Disabilities. Jackson, D. et al. 1998. 66.0808.01
This social skills training program, designed for adolescents who have developmental disabilities, is intended to be used as a guide to introducing new social skills and supporting their use in real life. It includes teaching strategies, an instructional model and a comprehensive curriculum.

This manual is a self esteem and life skills workbook for young people aged 8-14 years. Topics cover many interpersonal relationship issues including emotional development and friendships.

The Social Skills Game. Berg, B. 1990. 66.0563.01
The purpose of this game is for players to learn how to use self talk to reflect on their social experiences and how to think positively about the outcomes of social interactions. The Social Skills Workbook is designed to be used with this game.

Model Me Conversation Cues DVD. Model Me Kids. 2007. 66.1384.01
This DVD features middle and high school aged learners demonstrating social skills at school and in the community.

How to Start a Conversation and Make Friends. Gabor, D. 2003. 66.1155.01
This book details how to master the art of conversation, including how to approach other people, the right questions to ask, how to keep a conversation going and how much should be revealed about oneself.

This program is designed to be used with people with intellectual disabilities and/or communication disorders. It aims to teach participants the skills needed to have effective communications. See also 66.1000.02 Conversation Skills 2

Social Skills Teaching for Junior Classes. Van Der Kley, M. 1998. 66.1190.01
This book contains a program designed to teach positive social behaviours and skills to learners aged 5-8 years, including following instructions/directions, conversation skills, turn taking, friendship skills, developing confidence and self esteem, self control over emotions and behaviours, putting in effort, considering others point of views, cooperative skills, compromise and problem solving skills.

Playing it Right: Social Skills Activities for Parent & teachers of Young Children with Aspergers, Autism & PDD. Schuchardt, P. 2002. 66.1195.01
This book is designed to assist learners aged between 4 and 8 years of aged to communicate and interact effectively in social context.
**JOURNAL ARTICLES RELATED TO THE TOPIC**

**Getting Everyone Involved. Identifying Transition Opportunities for Youth with Severe Disabilities**  
Swedeen, Beth L; Carter, Erik W; Molfenter, Nancy  
Teaching Exceptional Children  
Vol 43:2 Nov / Dec 2010  
SERU 1932

**Collaboration to Promote Social Competence for Students with Mild Disabilities in the General Classroom: A Structure for Providing Social Support**  
Meadan, H; Monda - Amaya, Lisa  
Intervention In School And Clinic  
Vol 43 No 3, January 2008  
SERU 1540

**Life Construction Ahead**  
Bolick, Teresa  
Autism Spectrum Quarterly  
Spring 2008  
SERU 1549

**Improving Social Skills for Children with High Functioning Autism**  
Freedman, Brian; Silverman, Wayne  
Exceptional Parent  
Vol 38 Issue 5, May 2008  
SERU 1660

**Social Networking Web Sites - Teaching Appropriate Social Competence to Students with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders**  
Morgan, Joseph J.  
Intervention In School And Clinic  
Vol 45/3 January 2010  
SERU 1842

**Characteristics of the Closest Relationships Between Children with Developmental Disabilities and Peers in Inclusive Settings**  
Webster, Amanda A. & Carter, Mark  
Australasian Journal of Special Education  
Vol 34/1 2010  
SERU 1869

**Explicit Teaching Of Social Skills**  
Harold, Jean & Keown, Louise  
S E T  
1, 2010  
SERU 1902

**WEB LINKS**

A fact sheet on developing social skills in the Pre-school environment.

http://www.fraser.org/tip_sheets/index.htm  
This website offers a range of help sheets on social skills and a variety of other topics.

This document presents a definition of social stories, why they should be used, how to write them, who can benefit from their use and sample stories.

This website provides a brief introduction and background to the Better Buddies program.

A range of school case studies are provided that focus solely on bullying, harassment, violence and discrimination, others address the long-term wellbeing of students and communities.

http://www.socialskillbuilder.com/articles/video-modeling-research.html  
An overview of video modelling is given on this webpage.

http://www.transformingconflict.org/Restorative_Approaches_and_Practices.htm  
This webpage provides an overview of Restorative Justice approaches and practices
The Livescribe digital pen has been consistently featured in previous editions of SERUpdate. This amazing tool offers many possibilities for access to the curriculum and support for learning. The pen utilizes special note book paper to create multimodal recordings.

Livescribe has recently announced the release of additional paper products which offer even greater scope for use in the classroom. Already in use in the United States, they will soon be available in Australia. Updated information can be found at www.smartpen.com.au.

**Grid lined Paper**

Note books are now available with grid lines. This is ideally suited to recording math activities in the areas of geometry, measurement and algebra.

**Sound Stickers**

These stickers can hold and playback audio recordings. They could be used to create interactive flash cards, study guides, talking books, audio instructions, oral reports or annotations for projects. The stickers have a strong re-usable adhesive backing. There are 1000 re-recordable stickers in a pack. The stickers are 19 mm in diameter.

**Sticky Notes**

These notes come in two sizes and have repositionable adhesive backing. These are useful for capturing short notes, reminders and lists. They can also be used to record an audio note and stick to a page in a book or magazine.
The iModeling app is a Video Modeling application designed to teach skills to people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other disabilities. Video Modeling uses video to teach new skills. The iModeling app is based on research into Video Modeling conducted by Autism SA and the Disabilities Research Unit at the University of Adelaide, South Australia. The iModeling Project is funded by two grants from the Telstra Foundation over six years.

The research behind iModeling is described in an article in this edition of SERUpdate.

iModeling can be used to create videos to teach skills to a person who is a visual learner. Almost any skill can be taught using iModeling. Video Modeling has been used to teach literacy skills, compliment giving, play skills, turn-taking, fitness skills, conversation skills (saying hello, joining in a conversation, saying goodbye) and life skills (buttering toast, cleaning a bedroom, making mayonnaise).

The iModeling app is designed for easy and quick use. Users can instantly record their own video footage (or use existing footage on the camera roll) and edit the footage. The app takes users through 5 steps to create a video model:

1. Create a title
2. Record and edit footage
3. Include a reward image for watching the video model
4. Assign the video model to a specific child account
5. Review the video model and save.

It is now ready for use. The app creates a parent (administrator) profile. This profile manages the creation of children profiles and which videos are viewed by which child.

All Abilities ePlayground

This is an accessible website that is part of the accessible playground movement in Queensland.

All Abilities ePlayground includes options to play using a mouse and keyboard, a single switch, Puff2Play (blowing into the mic), blind mode (This includes a blind and single switch version.) and interactive whiteboard.

The four games have multiple levels; Ibis Buster involves "shooing" away birds and other animals from a beach your avatar is walking on; Memory is a matching game (level one is animals, two is musical instruments and three is weather conditions; TrixMix allows you to activate animals which each make a different sound in order to play or recreate music and in Roo Hill Thrill, you control your avatar as it surfs and tries to avoid balls.

In the single switch version you can use the settings (accessed by pressing "s") to toggle scanning on and off, control scanning speed, frame color (the box that shows hot spots), and switch activation type as well as background sound effects. Registration is free.

http://www.allabilitiesplayground.net.au/index.html
Strategies That Work Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement. Harvey, S. & Guo, V. A. 2007. 36.0242.01
This revised edition for teachers demonstrates how to explicitly teach thinking strategies. It has a new section which describes how to apply comprehension strategies across the curriculum and is suitable for use with primary aged students.

If You See a Crocodile, Orchard Toys. 2009. 82.0619.01
Students row their boat to the boathouse by matching the coloured spot on the dice the colours on the game board. If students pick up a crocodile card, they scream. Playing the game encourages communication, turn taking and sharing. It is designed for children from 3 to 8 years.

Musical Fishbowl, Fisher Price. 2007. 81.1488.01
This brightly coloured fishbowl contains three fish and when turned on it alternately bubbles and plays a tune. It is suitable for pre-school to reception.

This resource offers a comprehensive and easy to follow framework, that can be used by teachers or parents/carers of individuals on the ASD spectrum. It is structured with the aim of providing the individual with all the supports and strategies needed on a daily basis. It can be used with students of any age.

Build a Picture Tub. The Little Architect. 82.0621.01
This resources contains small multi coloured construction pieces and 12 picture cards to offer ideas as a starting point for building.

Social Safety Pack, Pear Shaped Learning Aids. 66.1451.01
This pack has various components that could be used independently or together and is primarily intended for use with students who have special needs and/or learning difficulties. It is aimed at students who are about to or who are going through puberty.

Close Encounters Beginner Reader. Brawn, P. 2011. 63.3111.01
This book with accompanying CD is for older secondary aged and adult students who have developed literacy skills. There are four short stories with black and white illustrations. Each story has pre reading and post reading exercises with answers.

Two Sided Bean Bag Toss. 84.0455.01
In this game students are required to toss the bean bag through each of the five holes in the stand up double sided board. It is used to develop hand eye coordination.

Clever castle Clue Solving Game. 2008. 885.0685.01
This game encourages thinking skills and problem solving. It is intended to be played individually but adults may assist students to develop skills by encouraging them to verbalise their thinking. The challenge book contains 40 challenges from easy to hard. The challenge is to place each guest in the correct castle window to form a particular pattern. Suitable for primary aged students.

Homonyms Basic Skills Puzzles. 67.0563.02
When using this resource, students put together three self correcting puzzles, illustrating 26 words that are spelled the same but have different meanings. Suggestions are given for further activities. Suitable for early years students.

Roll A Ball Surfing. 83.1675.01
The three platforms of this toy are designed to ensure that when a ball is placed on the top platform it will roll along until it falls through to the next platform, eventually reaching the bottom. It is useful for developing eye hand coordination, eye tracking and cause and effect.

Say Please Tea Set. Fisher Price. 62.0449.01
This tea set is suitable for use by children from preschool upwards to encourage imaginative play and social development.

The Preschooler Book, Sanders, M. et al. 2006. 24.0193.01
Part of the Positive Parenting Programme (Triple P) series, this program aims to give parents strategies to help them raise healthy, well adjusted children. Strategies are provided to help manage everyday behaviour difficulties in children and 3-5 years.
Tilt Teetering Logic Maze. Thinkfun. 2010. 85.0675.01
This resource is a multi-challenge maze game with four levels of play from beginner to expert. Players select a challenge card and place a blocker and slider token on the grid as indicated. The goal is to tilt the board to get the green sliders through the centre hole whilst leaving the blue sliders on the grid.

Aspergers Syndrome and Bullying Strategies and Solutions. Dubin, N. 2007. 19.0339.01
Nick Dubin was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome at ten years and had encountered a great deal of bullying. As an outcome he wrote this book, to empower other victims of bullying also including those involved in the process: parents, bystanders, teachers and the school community. The strategies he offers could be used in primary and secondary settings.

Teacher Talk Workbooks. Greenberg, J. & Weitzman, E. 2005. 17.0333.01
These three interactive workbooks are training modules for early childhood educators. The books provide strategies that promote a stimulating language learning environment for young children that encourages language development, build early literacy skills and provides a physical and social environment that encourages peer interaction.

Tabletop Pocket Chart 100 Board. 64.1523.01
This stand up chart with see through pockets can be used with students to help them understand a variety of numerical concepts and operations. Included in the pack are cardboard tiles showing arithmetic signs. The activity guide gives details of games that can be played using the tiles and chart. It can be used with individuals or small groups.

Special Needs What to Know and What To Do. MacConville, R. 2010. 07.0030.01
This resource provides materials to be used in training and development programs to help educators identify and support students with special needs that includes learning, medical and behavioural needs. Specific information is provided for 22 medical conditions.

In this visual workbook the author presents a hundred of the most common figures of speech. It is designed as a discussion starter for families and the classroom. Each figure of speech is accompanied by a black and white comic illustration showing it’s literal meaning.

Working With Words. Wallis, A. 2009. 61.1030.01
This resource provides a variety of thinking skills exercises and visual organizers to assist learners to develop their vocabulary and word knowledge. It can be used from junior primary through to secondary.

Making Sense of Phonics. Beck, I. 2006. 63.3313.01
This book provides strategies for building children’s decoding skills. These strategies are developed into an explicit, systematic phonics instructional program that can be implemented for Junior primary and primary students or older students who are having difficulties.

Working with Sentences. Wallis, A. 2003. 61.1029.01
This resource provides an oral language program designed to give learners a greater awareness of how sentences work, how they are constructed and how they are used. It is suitable for use with six to nine year olds working in small groups.

Smart Mouth. Thinkfun. 67.0561.01
Smart Mouth is a word game that can be played by individuals, small groups or the whole class. It requires word letter and sound knowledge. Several variations are described that make the game cross curricular and it is suitable for primary and middle years students.

Bringing Words To Life Robust Vocabulary Instruction. Beck, I. et al. 2002. 36.0288.01
This book offers strategies for enriching the verbal environment when teaching vocabulary in the primary years.

The Walking Birthday Cake and Other Stories. Chau, E. 2002. 63.3310.01
This book with accompanying CD is for older secondary aged and adult students who have developed literacy skills. There are four short stories with black and white illustrations. Each story has pre reading and post reading exercises with answers.
Would you like to contribute an article? The SERUpdate relies on the willingness of DECS personnel to contribute articles. Feedback from readers confirms that contributions from sites are a valuable way of keeping informed with what is happening at other schools.

The theme for the next edition of SERUpdate is ‘Technology in Special Education – Local Stories.’ Contributors may like to consider the following guiding questions when formulating an article:

- How has the technology enhanced teaching and learning with your students?
- Has the technology enhanced social participation / inclusion of your students?
- How have you embedded a technology tool kit into your teaching and learning program?
- How have these classroom initiatives influenced/impacted on the school culture?
- Who or what has guided you in using new technologies in your classroom? (professional support and training/conferences e.g. Spectronics)

Your contribution could include a case study, anecdotal observation, home/partnerships, implementation challenges (e.g. planning, technical support, professional learning required).

---

**Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) Introductory Workshop**

*Presented by Gayle Porter & Janelle Sampson*

**Two-Day Workshop**

*Thursday, 1st December 2011*  
*Friday, 2nd December 2011*  
*9.00am to 4.30pm*

**Venue:** Novita, Regency Park Theatre, 171 Days Road, Regency Park

Vivienne Wallace, Novita Children’s Services. PO Box 2438, Regency Park 5942  
Email: vivienne.wallace@novita.org.au  Fax: 08 8243 8361

Descriptors and registration forms can be found at [http://web.seru.sa.edu.au/Workshops.htm](http://web.seru.sa.edu.au/Workshops.htm)