Developing communication, social skills, and appropriate behaviours is an important part of the teaching and learning process. Every student is different and has unique needs.

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Impairments in communication and social skills are among the primary characteristics of ASD. These skills, in turn, are intertwined with behaviour. Severe problem behaviours that some students display – such as tantrums, aggression, destructiveness, and self-injurious behaviours – may be related to the difficulties they have with communication, adapting to change, understanding social situations, and their level of functioning. The communication, social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties experienced by students with ASD can vary. In order to learn effectively and engage successfully in the life of the classroom, some students may need behavioural supports due to medical, emotional, physical, or cognitive challenges, as well perceptual or sensory differences.

Everything a student does is behaviour. Some behaviour is effective. It meets the student’s need, is understood and considered appropriate by others, and reflects the student’s interaction with the environment. Other behaviours may be ineffective but occur because they are a student’s best available strategy for interacting with the environment and having his or her needs met.

Many of the challenging behaviours exhibited by students with ASD are methods used by the child to:
• gain something (e.g., desired object, attention);
• make a change in the environment (e.g., increase stimulation level, change to a more preferred activity);
• escape the environment (e.g., leave situation that is stressful).

Effectively managing behaviours requires that we consider not just the behaviour itself – what the student is doing – but also the underlying purpose of the behaviour. If we focus only on what the student is doing, and try to eliminate the behaviour, we may find that another behaviour arises in its place, because the underlying need has not been met. It is important to remember that inappropriate behaviours are usually in response to something in the
student’s environment and are an attempt to communicate a need, rather than deliberate acts of aggression or purposefully negative behaviour.

Managing the behaviours of some students with ASD can be a challenging and stressful issue faced by school staff and parents. Behaviours such as destruction of property, physical aggression, self-injury, and tantrums are affected by, and can affect, the development of appropriate social and educational skills. Students exhibiting these behaviours are often at risk for exclusion and isolation (National Research Council, 2001).

Variable factors, such as those described below, may influence decisions about developing effective management strategies.

1. **Definitions of problem behaviour are variable**
   What can be identified as a behaviour problem may change depending on the variables. For example, the student, teacher, and environment all play a significant part in whether the behaviour is acceptable. Adults often approach the subject of behaviour from the perspective of their own life experiences and current circumstances. These perspectives affect the acceptance, tolerance, internal rules, and overall framework for expectations of the student. As a result, everyone involved is likely to see the situation in a different way, on the basis of factors such as the following:
   - personal childhood experiences
   - cultural background
   - school policies
   - the individual’s relationship with the student

2. **Behaviour is student and situation dependent**
   It is often challenging to determine how the unique needs of the student should be considered in relation to expectations about the student’s behaviour. For example, the expectations and response regarding a student who is unaware of the inappropriateness of a specific behaviour would be different from those regarding a student who is aware. Likewise, factors such as the age of the student and behaviours of the student in other situations or settings come to bear on our decisions about what is considered acceptable behaviour.
Successful Practices for Behaviour Management

Managing Challenging Behaviours Is a Process
Managing challenging behaviours of students with ASD requires a collaborative team problem-solving process that includes parents and others who interact with the student. It is critical that the team consider the student’s behaviour across various situations, and how to manage behaviours that arise in different settings and circumstances during the day. It is also important to establish consistency across the collaborative team, in regard to both expectations and planned responses.

One example of an effective behavioural support strategy is to help a student learn to use an alternative way to communicate feelings that have led to behaviour problems in the past. Teaching the student to use specific words, gestures, or visual supports (such as pictures) to identify and communicate feelings provides an alternative that may reduce or replace the disruptive behaviour. Behavioural support strategies help to prevent problems from occurring and enable students to acquire more effective, appropriate ways for interacting with the environment.

The principles and strategies of ABA, as discussed previously in this guide, provide an effective approach to managing the challenging behaviours of students with ASD. The focus is on measuring and tracking behaviours over time to determine the function of the target behaviour (for the student), and altering the behaviour (either increasing or decreasing its occurrence) by providing intervention.
Behaviour support plans need to be developed to manage some challenging behaviours. An effective support plan will:

- be based on a functional assessment and analysis of the student’s behaviour;
- focus on the individual student;
- include methods for teaching alternatives to the behaviour problems;
- include strategies for making changes to the environmental and instructional circumstances found to be most associated with the problem.

Effective behaviour management is an ongoing process with definable steps. It begins with a functional behaviour assessment (FBA), which is a systematic process designed to look beyond the student’s behaviour and focus on identifying its function or purpose. Based on the FBA, a behavioural support plan is developed to identify alternative behaviours for the student, and strategies for reducing or replacing ineffective behaviours. Finally, ongoing monitoring is used to review progress and identify any changes that need to be made.

**Completing an FBA**

**Step 1: Define targeted behaviours**

Information needs to be collected to clearly identify and describe the problematic and challenging behaviours. Collecting data about a student’s behaviours helps to determine how frequently a targeted behaviour occurs and any changes that may take place over time. A variety of data-gathering methods should be considered, to ensure that a broad picture of the behaviour has been developed and that behaviours have been accurately observed, measured, and recorded.

Background information about the student can be gathered through interviews with the student, parents, teachers, or others who interact with the student, and provides valuable information about the student’s patterns of behaviour both in the classroom and in other situations and circumstances. Background information can also include current and previous student information found in the student’s OSR, such as the student’s academic history and assessment results.
Data can be collected indirectly, through interviews or reviewing past records, and directly, through observation. Collecting data about a particular behaviour will provide important information, including the following:

- where it happens (and does not happen)
- when it happens (and does not happen)
- who is usually present when behaviour happens (or does not happen)
- how often it happens and how long it lasts
- what else is happening in the environment
- the student’s reaction to the consequences of behaviour

Observation is an effective tool for gathering information about behaviour. Ideally the student should be observed across a broad range of situations and settings, including both structured and unstructured settings. Observations can be recorded anecdotally, or using a structured data-collection method such as graphs or scatter plots. Data-collection charts, such as the following example, can be designed to track specific behaviours and situations and to identify possible factors such as time of day or activities that might influence the student’s behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour A</th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 2</th>
<th>Lunchtime</th>
<th>Period 3</th>
<th>Period 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓✓✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour B</td>
<td>✓✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be useful to develop scales for tracking the intensity of a behaviour. Scales can be used to compare the perceptions of others about the behaviour, and to track changes over time. A typical scale might consist of:

- 1 = Mild disruption to others sitting nearby
- 3 = Moderate disruption to others within classroom
- 5 = Severe disruption to other classes
It is important to identify environmental factors that influence or increase the probability that the challenging behaviour will occur. A data-collection method such as ABC (Antecedent – Behaviour – Consequence) helps to determine patterns of behaviour and to identify factors that might be used to predict behaviours of concern.

ABC is a simple but effective method used to collect information about a student’s behaviours. ABC tracking assists in thinking about what is happening and looking at the behaviour in the context of the whole event, not just the specific action. Through the ABC method a chart similar to the one below is used to record:
- **Antecedent**: what happens before the behaviour problem occurs
- **Behaviour**: what the student does
- **Consequence**: what happens after or as a result of the behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(11:00) John was sitting with peers on carpet in library looking at book. The teacher directed the class to put away books and take out math activities.</td>
<td>John looked at the teacher and then threw the book at peer.</td>
<td>John was directed to leave the classroom and escorted to a chair outside the principal’s office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11:15) John entered the classroom while students were working on math activities.</td>
<td>John took box of math activities from table and threw on the floor.</td>
<td>John was directed to leave the classroom and escorted back to the principal’s office.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ABC method can be used to track and compare information about the patterns and relationships that may have developed between a student’s behaviours and other factors, such as various activities, time periods, and settings. It can be a helpful tool to identify the factors that have an effect on the behaviour, such as environmental factors and those internal to the student. For example, behaviours that occur when a student is hungry or in a crowded setting can be documented to identify whether these factors have an effect on the student’s behaviour. The information in the above sample ABC chart helps to identify the possibilities...
that John’s behaviours may be related to a desire to avoid the math activities and that an unintended reinforcement may be provided by a trip to the principal’s office.

**Step 2: Analyse data to develop a hypothesis about the function of the behaviour**

Once data have been collected, the next step is to analyse all of the information to determine what may be causing the student to maintain the challenging behaviour, and the purpose or “function” of the behaviour. For the previous example of John, it will be necessary to consider the background information that has been gathered from various sources about John and his behaviours, as well as further observations that have been recorded about his current behaviours across various time periods and activities.

Questions such as the following should be considered in analysing information about a student’s behaviours:

- What is the behaviour of concern? Is it a new or unusual behaviour for the student?
- How frequently does this behaviour occur?
- Is there a pattern to when it occurs (e.g., time of day, activity, setting, audience)?
- What happens just before the behaviour?
- What happens following the behaviour? Is there a consistent response from others or a consequence to the behaviour?
- What is the student’s reaction to the response or consequence to the behaviour? Does the behaviour change (e.g., frequency or intensity)?
- What are possibilities for the function of the behaviour for the student (e.g., gain or escape something)?

It is useful to look systematically at and analyse all of the information that has been collected to develop a hypothesis statement about the function of the student’s behaviour. The hypothesis needs to be articulated as a clear statement that contains the following elements:

*When [antecedent happens] the student will [inappropriate action] for the purpose of [what is gained or escaped]. This is more likely to happen if [other triggers …].*
**Step 3: Do a functional analysis to test the hypothesis**

A functional analysis is a systematic process through which antecedents and consequences are altered to develop or confirm the hypothesis about the function of the behaviour. For example, in the above case of John, we could begin a systematic process to try the following to test the hypothesis about John's behaviours:

- Provide John with other types of activities during this period.
- Introduce math activities at an earlier time in the morning or just after lunch.
- Schedule a break or walk in the hall for John prior to beginning math activities.
- Vary the types and difficulty levels of the math activities.
- Expect John to stay in the classroom and work on the task, if he throws something in response to math activities.

Through varying the antecedents and consequences, it may be found that the original hypothesis about the student's behaviour needs to be changed. For example, if John continues to throw items when other activities are presented during this period, the hypothesis statement could eventually be refined to this:

*When John is presented with activities that involve group work, he will throw items for the purpose of escaping from the task. This is more likely to happen if it is near lunchtime.*

**Step 4: Develop a behaviour support plan**

Once a hypothesis about the purpose of a behaviour is developed, a behaviour support plan can be designed to address the challenging behaviour of the student, on the basis of the earlier observation and analysis. The behaviour support plan should be individualized to the student and clearly set out what will be done to reduce the inappropriate behaviour.

The behaviour support plan is designed to:

- target the underlying reason for the behaviour;
- replace the inappropriate behaviour with an appropriate behaviour that serves the same function;
- reduce or eliminate challenging behaviour.
To develop a behaviour support plan:
• Consider how the antecedents (or environment) could be changed. For example, if the hypothesis is that the student’s behaviour is due to sensory stimulation, such as excessive noise, the strategy might be to reduce the noise level.
• Identify alternative behaviours that the student can use to achieve the same purpose. For example, in the case above, John could be shown how to use a phrase or visually communicate the message that he did not want to work in the group situation, rather than throw items.
• Consider strategies and supports that may be needed to help students to learn and use alternative behaviours.
• Focus on positive reinforcement methods to identify the consequences or reinforcements that will be used.
• Use the student’s strengths and interests to motivate the student.
• To help students learn to generalize appropriate skills, plan to promote the use of alternative behaviours across different settings and as independently as possible.
• Identify clearly the tasks involved and those responsible. For example, outline who will teach the student replacement behaviours, who will provide the reinforcement, and when and where the actions will take place.

It is important to remember that behaviour is established and develops over time, and that managing and changing behaviour is a process that takes time.

Step 5: Monitor progress and identify alternative strategies
It is necessary to continue monitoring the effectiveness of the interventions and behaviour support plan, and to establish a process for ongoing review and data collection to determine whether effective changes are occurring.

During this process, decisions may be made to:
• continue the current plan;
• change the plan and use alternative strategies;
• increase or decrease the degree of student support;
• target another behaviour;
• change reinforcements.
Communication Challenges Associated with ASD

The communication skills of students with ASD vary significantly. Communication challenges are central to ASD, however, and many students with ASD have difficulty communicating with others in a meaningful way or using functional communication skills.

Some students develop highly sophisticated vocabulary, although they may have difficulty using language in a way that is considered socially appropriate. Others are non-verbal and need to use an alternative form of communication, such as visuals or gestures, to share information with others. Some students do not have a method of communication that is easily recognized by others. It is important to understand the communication system that individual students use.

At least one-third of all individuals with ASD fail to develop spoken language (Bryson, 1996). Other students develop a limited vocabulary or acquire spoken language but have difficulty using language in a functional way. When speech does develop, unusual grammatical structures, pitch, tone, and inflection are common. Many students with ASD have difficulty understanding higher level, figurative language such as idioms, figures of speech, and abstract concepts. In these cases, a phrase such as “It’s raining cats and dogs” is likely to be interpreted literally and misunderstood.

Non-verbal communication skills include the use of gestures, visuals, facial expressions, and body language in communications with others. These skills are often difficult for students with ASD to recognize, understand, and use.

Social communication skills are typically an area of difficulty for students with ASD. Social communication skills involve the
Many students with ASD have difficulties using and understanding both verbal and non-verbal communication methods. Their communications with others may be further affected by impairments in social communication skills.

Sometimes, the communication methods used by students with ASD are unusual or not commonly used by others. As a result, their intended messages may not be understood. For example, some students frequently use made-up phrases or words that are meaningful to the student but unknown to the listener. Other students may use eye gaze or proximity to communicate a message that is not recognized or is overlooked by others.

Communication skills can significantly affect and be affected by sensitivities or impairments in other skill areas. For example, making eye contact with others during conversations and using eye gaze appropriately are common difficulties for individuals with ASD. Often, a difficulty with making eye contact is connected to a sensitivity to visual stimuli that is overwhelming to the individual.

The development and use of communication skills are closely connected to students’ behaviour and social skills. Some students use unusual or socially inappropriate behaviours to communicate. Often, the message that the student is trying to communicate is not recognized as a communication attempt, or is misunderstood.

It is important to determine the underlying cause for a student’s communication difficulties. For example, it is possible that a student who is not attentive or does not respond to communication attempts by others:

- Has difficulty processing verbal information
- Does not understand the communication method being used

A comprehensive assessment by a speech-language pathologist (SLP) will help to determine whether the difficulty this student has in responding to information from others is due to a receptive language, processing, attention, or other difficulty.
Strategies to Develop and Enhance Communication Skills

Effective communication programs for students with ASD need to support the development of functional communication skills to enhance or increase interactions with others. A communication program should use a variety of methods that are based on the student’s individual strengths and needs and the communication goals that are determined to be appropriate for the student. Decisions about the communication system that is considered most effective for a student to use are determined by an assessment of the student’s current communication abilities.

The student’s expressive, receptive, and social communication skills are usually assessed by an SLP. It is essential that the program to develop communication skills is at the level of the student’s cognitive and linguistic development and includes methods, words, or concepts that are meaningful and functional to the child.

For students who use spoken language, the goals of a communication program could be to enhance the development of language and communication skills and to increase the use of verbal behaviours. Communication goals for students who do not use spoken language could include learning to vocalize, gesture, sign manually, or use alternative methods, such as pictures or objects, to enhance communication attempts.

Students with ASD often require direct instruction, as well as opportunities for social interactions in which to learn, develop, and practise communication skills. It is often necessary to teach the student the verbal language and other communication methods that are required across a variety of communicative situations, such as the following:

- greetings (“Hello”, wave hand)
- requests (“Please help”, manual sign)
- refusals (“No, thank you”, shake head)
- comments (“I live on Main Street”, point to visual address).

Speech, language, and communication skills that are taught in the student’s natural environment are more likely to generalize to
The following strategies have been found to be effective to increase communication attempts for verbal and non-verbal students with ASD in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Strategies</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reinforce</strong> that communication is a method of interacting with others by responding to students’ communication attempts. It is important to be aware of and respond to a student’s early attempts to communicate, such as gestures and signals involving eye gaze and proximity. Allowing a student to have access to objects or activities in which an interest has been expressed will reinforce and increase communication attempts.</td>
<td>Hand a student who is learning to use gestures a favourite book after the student points to the bookshelf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure the learning environment</strong> so that the student needs to communicate to access objects of interest and preferred activities. Incorporating preferred items into the student’s classroom will help to establish an environment in which the student is motivated to communicate in the actual setting in which similar, future communications are likely to occur.</td>
<td>Place a favourite item on a shelf outside of the student’s reach to provide an opportunity for the student to learn to ask for assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model</strong> more effective methods of communication to increase and expand the student’s communication efforts.</td>
<td>Model how to use the phrase “This is hard” to the student who throws a book on the floor when a task is difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide verbal, physical, or visual prompts</strong> as signals to encourage or enhance communications. Prompts can help students who don’t know what to say during routine or novel situations.</td>
<td>Provide a card with a written cue for an appropriate response (e.g., “It is snowing”) during routine weather activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pause frequently</strong> during activities the student prefers. The student’s motivation to participate in or continue with a motivating activity will provide an incentive for the student to communicate.</td>
<td>Pause in the middle of reading a familiar part of the student’s favourite story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An important component of developing functional communication methods to replace behaviours is that the student must consistently meet with success when learning the replacement communication. Otherwise, the student may revert to the original behaviours that had previously achieved the desired results. For example, if a student is learning to use the phrase “I need to leave” to replace hitting out at others, it is important that he is consistently provided with an opportunity to leave the situation in response to the phrase.
Augmentative and Alternative Communication Methods

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) makes use of services and devices, such as visual symbols, signs, or voice output devices, to supplement (augment) or replace (serve as an alternative to) a student’s current method of communication. Although AAC methods have been found to be most useful for students who do not develop functional speech or those who have difficulty processing spoken language, they are also used successfully to help verbal students to communicate or understand complex or abstract information more effectively.

There is a variety of AAC systems. They can be simply made, inexpensive, low-tech devices such as pictures and word cards. Others can also be more complex, expensive, high-tech systems such as computerized voice output devices with synthesized and digitized speech. In many cases, AAC systems are portable and can be used in different settings. They are reasonably easy for others to understand and use.

Visual systems use communication boards, objects, picture cards, or visual symbols to support or expand spontaneous, functional communication attempts for some students with ASD. In most cases, the visuals are organized thematically in a system that is easy for the student to access across various settings.

**The use of visuals to support communication is most effective when:**

- Visuals **reflect the student’s particular interests** or needs
- Students take an **active role** in using and handling visual materials
- Students **establish a connection** between the activity or object and the visual
- Visual systems are **readily available** (e.g., kept in a consistent location) to the students and others in the environment
- Visuals are **durable** and quickly replaceable
- Visual systems are **used consistently**.
Students who have not developed speech may be able to use a visual system to communicate information. Other students who have developed some verbal language may benefit from using a visual system to provide more specific information or to reinforce their messages.

Technology-based tools can be used to support programs to develop communication skills such as oral comprehension, oral expression, conversation skills, and learning to listen. Software programs are available that can be used to develop visual aids, provide voice output to text and word prediction, match visuals to oral, and provide opportunities for structured learning and practice of skills.

As the communication challenges of students with ASD can vary widely, it is important that the family and an SLP are involved with school staff in the determination of the most effective AAC system that is suited to the needs and abilities of the student.

Although AAC systems are widely used to support the oral and written communications of students with ASD, there has been limited research on the types of technology and the implementation methods that are most effective.

**Gestures and Manual Signs**

Gestures and manual signs provide a visual means of communication for students who are verbal or non-verbal. They have been found to be effective low-tech AAC methods for some students with ASD. Each of these methods needs to be considered in the context of the student’s functional communication system. Some limitations to the use of gestures and manual signs have been attributed to difficulties a student may have with motor and imitation skills and the fact that all gestures and manual signs are not universally recognized.

The decision regarding the use of gestures and manual signs with a student should be based on assessment by an SLP and an OT of the student’s ability to use these methods. Also, the abilities of others in the student’s environment to understand and use the gestures and signs should be considered.
### Activities to Enhance Interactions and Promote the Use of Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide <em>language scripts</em> of appropriate phrases for the student to use during routine and social situations.</td>
<td>The use of print or pictures that are appropriate to the context of predictable situations can provide students with “ready-to-use” language that can be rehearsed and reviewed, and can also expand the length and number of utterances during involvement in activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the student to <em>act out</em> a familiar story using figures and objects.</td>
<td>Visual supports, props, scripts, and actions can be used to engage students in an activity that is interactive and helps them to understand the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the student <em>orally</em> read with others.</td>
<td>Stories and poems with predictable storylines or repetitive language patterns can be used for the students to take turns reading selected parts. The consistent language patterns can reinforce communication routines (e.g., your turn, my turn).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities to <em>use</em> and <em>rehearse</em> language across activities and subject areas.</td>
<td>Repeated exposure to the same theme across a variety of resources and related activities (e.g., reading stories, singing songs, finding pictures) can help students to generalize vocabulary and skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model and rehearse appropriate language through <em>play</em>.</td>
<td>Resources such as toys, puppets, and pictures can be used to represent activities and events in which appropriate actions and dialogue are modeled and acted out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide students with <em>opportunities to watch</em> communications between themselves and others.</td>
<td>Viewing videotapes of self and peer models can increase conversational skills of children with ASD.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Echolalia

Echolalia is the repetition of the words or phrases used by others. It can be immediate (occur right after the original utterances) or delayed (occur significantly later than them). Echolalia is common in students with ASD and has been found to serve a variety of purposes. In some situations and for some students, echolalia is used as a method to communicate or interact with others or in response to something in the student’s environment. In other cases, echolalia has no apparent communicative or interactive function and appears to be a form of practice for the student to learn language or regulate self-behaviour. The use of echolalia increases when some students have difficulty comprehending language. Regardless of the type or purpose of echolalia, it should be considered as part of the child’s system of communication, rather than an isolated behaviour (Rydell & Prizant, 1995).

It is important not to assume that the student understands or is intentionally using the content of the echolalic speech being used. For example, a student may repeat a phrase in response to a situation that is causing anxiety. The phrase that is used by the student to indicate anxiety may not be related to specific details in the current situation, but is a phrase that was used in a previous stressful situation. In this case, teaching the student to recognize anxious feelings, practise calming techniques, and use an alternative phrase such as “I’m upset” to indicate anxiety may be an appropriate intervention.

An assessment and analysis of the student’s echolalic behaviours and patterns within the context of the student’s environment should be done to understand the role and purpose of the echolalia and to determine the interventions that will be effective for the student. Individualized goals and strategies should be developed according to an analysis of the student’s use of echolalia. The goal of strategies could be to expand, reduce, or replace the echoic utterances.
Enhancing Communications with Students

The possibility of successful communications can be increased by being aware of and using strategies such as the following to enhance and support communications with students:

- Communicate at the student’s level.
- Establish the student’s attention.
- Prepare the student for what is going to be communicated.
- Support messages visually with gestures, body language, and pictures.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Don’t overload the student with information.
- Pause to allow the student time to comprehend and respond.
- Guide or prompt the student to respond if needed.
- Stay with the interaction or repeat until the desired response is achieved.

(Hodgdon, 1999)
The Development of Social Skills for Students with ASD

When considering the development of social interaction skills for students with ASD, it is important to keep in mind that impairment in the area of social skills is associated with a diagnosis of the disorder. Individuals with ASD generally do not learn social skills through incidental experiences and exposure to social situations. Most often, it is necessary to work on skill development by directly teaching the language and rituals of social interaction. Students with ASD also need to be provided opportunities to use their social skills and generalize them to the larger school environment, home, and community.

Building a Foundation for Skill Development

When a student with ASD enters school, it is important for the teacher, support personnel, and parents to discuss and develop a comprehensive profile of the social skills already used by the student in other environments, such as the preschool, daycare, home, and community settings. It is necessary to observe the student in the school setting to see how or whether these skills are generalizing to the new school environment. When an accurate picture has been formed, a plan for social skill development can be devised.

It is important for both teachers and parents to keep in mind that the development of social interaction skills will take time, patience, and consistency. There is a continuum of development from fundamental skills, such as learning to share toys, to the complex issues of adolescence and young adulthood. Skill development may come quickly at some points and slowly at others, depending on the student’s ability to receive information and the intensity of focus in other skill areas.
How Peers Can Help

An important component in building a solid foundation for skill development is the creation of a climate in the classroom and school in which individual differences are understood, accepted, and accommodated. Peers will play a significant role in helping a student learn how to interact successfully.

While many natural social interactions between the student with ASD and his classmates will occur in the daily round of school activities, sometimes a more formalized arrangement is required to promote interactions. Peers can take on the roles of being supportive buddies during recess and lunch, in the library and gym, at the computer, and during cooperative work periods for specific subjects.

While the student with ASD may benefit from both formal and informal interactions with classmates and other students in the school, others will also benefit from their association with the student with ASD by developing an understanding and appreciation of human difference.

Peer Awareness

Most students are curious about the nature of a classmate’s difference. When this happens, it may be helpful to create a level of awareness about ASD. Demystification of disability opens the

Guidelines for Buddy Systems

- Explain to the group the purpose of being a buddy: to help their classmate learn to have friends and develop social skills.
- Participation must be voluntary. Occasionally a classmate initially may not wish to be a buddy.
- Give some ownership of the process to the class. Allow the class to generate ideas for activities and ways to help their classmate.
- Arrange for buddies to work in pairs so that they can talk about and plan their activities.

Also, when there are two buddies, should an incident occur on the schoolyard, for instance, one student can stay with the classmate, while the other seeks assistance.

- As in the case of any individual, the student with ASD may, at times, wish to be alone. This must be acknowledged, as sometimes students feel overwhelmed and need quiet times to “regroup” so that they can move forward in their day calmly.
door to communication and understanding of individual strengths and abilities. With understanding comes acceptance. This, however, raises some important considerations:

- Caution must always be used to protect the right to privacy of the student and the family. Any disclosure of information must be done in a manner consistent with school board policies and applicable privacy legislation.
- If the student’s parents want information about their child’s diagnosis or characteristics to be shared with classmates and other people in the school, it is important to discuss how it should be shared. Some parents will choose to come into the class and explain the nature of the diagnosis and how it is manifested in their child, while others will prefer that the teacher share this information and perhaps distribute an appropriate piece of children’s literature on disability and difference. (See the list of children’s books on ASD in Appendix B: Resources).
- It is necessary to consider whether the student with ASD is aware of the diagnosis and the student’s level of comfort with this information being shared with classmates. In some cases, students with ASD have been the ones to share the information (giving them control of the process).
- Parents and teachers need to decide whether the student with ASD should be present during the sharing session. Sometimes, classmates are more comfortable asking their questions if the student is not present. In other situations, the student with ASD may be able to answer classmates’ questions and participate in the experience.
- In all cases, whether specific information about a student can be shared or not, it is important that a comfort level for all students be established. Opportunities for students to recognize and appreciate aspects of human difference, such as individual strengths and abilities, should be an ongoing part of instruction. There is also a growing body of children’s literature dealing with disability and difference, which can serve to open discussion and facilitate learning. In a multicultural, inclusive society, it is crucial that students be prepared to understand and accept human difference in all of its forms.
The Issue of Eye Contact
The establishment and maintenance of eye contact is often regarded as one of the fundamental components of social interaction. However, many individuals with ASD report that they can either look at others or listen to others, but not do both. Making eye contact is a factor that frequently compounds their difficulties with social interaction.

In some cases, it is appropriate to work towards building eye contact during social interaction, if only for short periods. As eye contact during social interaction is valued in our society, encouragement and training for play and social interaction may be the most appropriate starting point. Work slowly and carefully. Generally, as a student gets to know you and becomes accustomed to the sound of your voice, he or she will be more likely to look at you comfortably.

A reasoned and moderate approach to this issue will help to alleviate anxiety for a student who, with time, may become more able to establish eye contact. It is critical to keep in mind that this will be to the student’s comfort level, not to ours.

Some individuals with ASD will continue to have difficulties with making eye contact. Their communications with others are easier when they focus on another physical detail of the speaker or in the environment. It is important to consider that emphasizing or focusing on the skill of making eye contact may reduce or limit the student’s abilities to communicate.

Theory of Mind
Simply described, “Theory of Mind” is the ability to attribute thoughts and feelings to others. Individuals with ASD generally have difficulty imagining how other people may be feeling in a situation or forming hypotheses about what others may be thinking. Because of this, understanding the nuances of social interaction may be very difficult.

Students with ASD are often unable to discern unwritten social rules and may find themselves in social difficulty because of their inability to perceive the subtleties of interaction. Very often,
direct teaching and ongoing mentoring are necessary to help the student develop an awareness of expectations and to generalize appropriate responses and behaviours across the school environment.

Although it is difficult for many students with ASD to develop a comprehensive understanding of what other people may be thinking or feeling, such students can be provided with the tools needed to manage their social behaviours and establish relationships with others to the best of their ability.

The Fundamentals of Social Skill Instruction

To facilitate positive interactions at school, the following social skills are particularly important for students to learn:

- greetings
- initiating and closing interactions
- choosing activities
- sharing
- waiting
- turn taking
- playing games

Greetings

When teaching students with ASD how to greet others, observe how other students in the class and at that age level greet each other. While shaking hands with someone is good manners, it is rarely appropriate for peer interactions. Student with ASD may initially need to be prompted through the greeting, as well as reinforced for all efforts. Peers should also be reinforced for being partners in teaching this important skill.

Very often, school staff will greet the student as he or she travels in the halls of the school. As days are busy, they may be in a hurry or not realize that the student with ASD (as well as students with other developmental disabilities) may not be able to respond as quickly to a greeting as others can. People in the school need to know that if they greet the student, they must be prepared
to wait the 10 or 20 seconds it may take the student with ASD to respond.

**Initiating and Closing Interactions**

Social scripts (see “Social Scripts” in the “Strategies to Facilitate Social Understanding” section below) can be a very useful strategy to help students know the expectations of how to enter a play situation or how to ask someone to play. It is important to keep in mind that this is a skill that can be difficult for many other students as well, who might also benefit from direct instruction in this area. While instructing and coaching the student with ASD on how to initiate an interaction or enter a play situation, it is also important to coach peers on how to receive the student, that is, how to be welcoming.

Similarly, students with ASD need to know how to leave a play situation politely. Through direct teaching, which might include demonstration, rehearsal, and prompting, the student is instructed through “leaving” scenarios. Peers are also coached to demonstrate a wave or to say “See you later” or another phrase denoting closure.

**Choosing Activities**

As previously discussed in this guide, transitions between activities are often difficult for students with ASD, and choosing a new activity can lead to increased anxiety and unusual or inappropriate behaviours. The following strategies have been found to be useful in helping students make a choice about activities:

- Clearly note “Activity Time” on the students’ visual schedules.
- Provide a visual choice board using either photographs or picture symbols to inform the students of the available activities.
- Allow students to have autonomy over the choice process.
- Sometimes, students have one preferred activity at which they would choose to spend all of their time. When this happens, it
is helpful to provide transition warnings, such as using a timer, to let the students know that it is time to move to another activity. Once the preferred activity has been selected, it is removed from the choice board and is no longer available as a choice. This is simple, visual, and obvious and can encourage students to broaden their interests.

- When engaging with peers, it will be important for the student with ASD to work towards being able to participate in another classmate’s activity choice. This should be done with a supportive and preferred peer. Initially, this may be possible only for a short period of time, and the length of time be extended naturally or in small increments.

**Sharing**
The concept of sharing is fairly abstract and, similar to Theory of Mind, involves an understanding that others have a need or desire for something and will share with us. Students with ASD often have difficulty understanding either what sharing means or why it is necessary. Sharing is a skill that may need to be taught directly.

- Initially, the concept of sharing may be best taught in a quiet, non-distracting environment. The instructor would have control of the materials (e.g., building blocks), which are visible to the student.
- The word “share” is emphasized with simple language as the student is handed a block (e.g., “I share the blocks.”).
- This continues, with the sharing statement being repeated each time, until the student has several blocks.
- The student is then given an instruction to share. At this point, the student may need to be prompted to give a block to the instructor. This prompt may be gestural: the instructor holds out a hand and says, “Share.” If the student is able to do so, praise lavishly.
- If the student is not able to follow through, then continue to repeat instructional sessions. The materials for sharing can vary across sessions.
- Important throughout is the student’s awareness that he is not going to lose the item by sharing it. He, too, will be able to participate in using it.
• When the concept has been learned, add a supportive peer to the situation and work on extension of the skill to include sharing with the peer.
• When the student has learned to share in a structured process, activities can be created in the classroom for the student to practise sharing in other situations, such as sharing art supplies.
• While this process may appear to be lengthy and involved, careful training for sharing can help students learn this important skill.

Waiting
Being able to wait, either to take one’s turn, to eat lunch, or to go home, is a critical life skill. This is a skill that may have to be developed incrementally, using specific tools and strategies, which can include the following:
• a “First …, then …” board
• a visual schedule
• a timing device
• distracters, such as tokens that can be removed one at a time to denote a “countdown”
• a high rate of reinforcement for waiting
• reliable follow-through: the student has waited, so he receives the item

Turn Taking
Like sharing, turn taking is another skill that initially may be best taught directly in a quiet, non-distracting environment. The student needs to know what the term means and what it involves. When teaching turn taking:
• use a simple or familiar toy or game. The act of taking turns can be demonstrated for the student while he is prompted (if necessary) through the turn-taking process. Key terms, such as “My turn” and “Your turn”, must be associated with the movements involved;
• reinforce the student’s participation in the process of waiting for a turn;
• occasionally pause before saying “Your turn” so that the student will develop an awareness of having to wait for the verbal cue.
Playing Games

By teaching students with ASD the specific skills that they will need for various activities and games, we enable students to enter into activities with a foundation of information and skills that they can apply to situations, and to be as independent as possible.

While many games appear to be simple, actually they are composed of fairly complicated sets of subskills. Teaching the student to play a game may be most successful when done in a quiet, non-distracting environment. These are some suggestions for teaching students with ASD to participate in games:

- In a step-by-step manner, introduce the game materials and demonstrate how to use them. Use as little language as possible. When dice are involved, it is worth the effort to help a student learn to automatically recognize the numbers represented by the dots. Otherwise the endless counting of dots will slow down the process of play when the student is with his peers.
- Demonstrate the expectations of the game (e.g., throwing a ball towards a target, moving a game piece, matching cards).
- Perform a task analysis to determine each step of the game. Incrementally demonstrate and practise the steps, adding each new step as the student experiences success.
- Practise the game regularly until the student understands the routines.
- When the student is comfortable playing with an adult, introduce a supportive peer to the game and rehearse until the student with ASD is again comfortable.
- If possible, videotape a small group of students playing the game so that the student can watch the routines and rituals of play over and over again so that he can develop an understanding of group expectations.
- Introduce the student to the group situation and step back. Let the student play as independently as possible.

By taking the time to develop the ability to play a game without constant peer or adult reminders and support, a life skill is developed. When a student is able to play independently without adult supervision and coaching, he is more likely to be included with peers. By taking this time, we are not only teaching the student...
with ASD valuable game-playing skills, but also facilitating positive social interaction.

The acquisition of these fundamental social interaction and play skills will facilitate social relationships with peers. As well, such skills will serve as a foundation on which to build skills as the student moves on to other environments.

Strategies to Facilitate Social Understanding

Social Scripts

For the child with ASD, the use of social scripts can play an integral role in the development of social skills. Scripts can be written to target the various situations in which a student regularly participates in order to teach what an individual should say and do in particular situations. They are used to clarify and provide a model of the language and processes of social interaction. Social scripts break down social situations into steps and clearly outline expectations, such as the rules or guidelines for social behaviour and good manners.

Tips for Composing Scripts

- Write a social script much like the script of a play, the words guiding the action and interaction. For example, a social script might be written on what to say when asking a peer to play a game.
- Rehearse over and over again until the student is confident about the conversational or action routine. It can then be embellished through natural, but directed, occurrence.
- Read the script with the student in various settings and at different times of day. Students need to be able to go through the conversational routine of the script without prompting; therefore, they may need to repeat particular conversations.
- Introduce the routine of the script without using the printed copy.
- Gradually add new components to the script, if possible without adding them to the printed copy. Make the new components as small as necessary. As the script is “played out” in different environments, add elements that are particular to the specific environment.
- Work for mastery of one script at a time.
- When the student is ready and a situation warrants, prepare a new script. If possible, use some of the words from previous scripts (controlled vocabulary).
- Create a “script book” in which the conversations are collected. Review them regularly.
**Stories That Teach Social Understanding**

Stories that are designed to teach or clarify social understanding differ from social scripts in that they explain why people act in certain ways rather than focus on the “how to” aspects of social situations. The idea is to inform the reader simply, clearly, and in a reassuring manner how and why he or she should respond in a certain way. Negative behaviours are not stated in this kind of a story, and alternative, positive behaviours are suggested. Such a story might explain how students can manage their time and behaviour at recess, and the ideal time to read this story would be before the bell signalling the beginning of recess rings.

**Recognizing Emotions and Facial Expressions**

Questions such as the following could be used with pictures (e.g., photographs of the student, parents, siblings; picture symbols; magazine pictures) to illustrate a range of emotions:

- What does happy (sad, angry, frightened, bored, etc.) look like?
- What makes me happy? (photo of child and preferred items)
- What makes Mommy happy?
- What makes Daddy happy?
- What makes my teacher happy?

A book can be created for each of the emotions (e.g., “What Is Happy?” book). Keep in mind that this recognition and understanding will not develop quickly for many students. These books may need to travel with the student from year to year. It will be important to update and add to them as classmates and staff change.

**The Use of Media in Developing Social Awareness**

Popular television shows and movies can be used to teach and reinforce understanding of social situations and facial expressions. When playing a recorded program or movie, use the pause button on the remote control to stop the video at key points, and then ask questions such as:

- Is the character a boy or a girl?
- What is the character’s name?
- What is he wearing?
• What expression is on his face?
• How does the character feel? Is he sad?
• Why is he sad?

A “feelings chart” containing, for example, picture symbols or photos, can be provided so that students can match and note the facial expressions of the characters.

It may be necessary to watch the video several times before students can answer the questions accurately.

**Issues in Adolescence**

Many fundamental social skills can be developed while students are in the primary and junior grades; however, as students enter the intermediate and secondary years, with puberty the social dynamics among peers begin to change, and peer relationships become more complex. Trying to understand interpersonal social dynamics at the intermediate and secondary levels can be a significant challenge for students with ASD. It is important to note that students with ASD may not share many of the social concerns of their classmates, such as issues of boy/girl relationships, status, fashion, and cliques.

There are, however, some areas of particular concern, such as hygiene and sexuality, for all students at this stage of development. This is a time when positive communication between home and school can serve the student well, as discussing any issues of concern is important. Issues such as body odour or inappropriate sexual behaviour must be tackled forthrightly, leaving no room for question. Students need to learn about their changing bodies, how to approach members of the opposite sex, and rules about appropriate sexual behaviour. This learning can be supported and reinforced at school and home. Methods for discussing these personal issues in ways that are dignified for the student, the family, and the school staff must be established.
Privacy
Students with ASD may need to have specific knowledge about what is private and what is public. Privacy includes knowing how to use a large, public washroom appropriately, as well as knowing what parts of their bodies are private and who may touch their body (i.e., their doctor). Definite rules need to be established and adherence to them coached and reinforced.

Privacy also concerns students’ personal information – their name, address, and so on. Students need to know the persons with whom it is safe to share that information. A significantly important example of this is the use or misuse of the Internet.

Safety
Many of the issues mentioned above can affect a student’s safety, both in the school and in the community. Students with disabilities can be vulnerable and may easily be victimized or bullied. It is essential that the student be given clear and definite rules about how to respond in difficult situations, for example, how to call for help. Because students with ASD have difficulty generalizing, it is important that parents and school personnel share and teach the same rules.

As students approach the last years in the school system, ongoing attention to social issues and social skill development is critically important for some students with ASD. Social skills will guide the individual’s ability to form relationships, have a social life, and understand what he or she needs to do in order to be safe. These goals are usually foremost in the minds of parents as they see their child move toward adulthood. Working together in positive ways, we can give students as many tools as possible to help them manage at home, at school, and in the larger community environment.
About Asperger’s Disorder

Challenges Associated with Asperger’s Disorder

Asperger’s Disorder, commonly known as Asperger’s syndrome or Asperger’s, is one of the disorders found within the range of ASDs. Some unique features related to a diagnosis of this disorder are outlined in *DSM-IV-TR* (APA, 2000), and specific strategies should be considered for students in whom this disorder has been diagnosed.

A diagnosis of Asperger’s Disorder is associated with the characteristics described below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impairment in Skill Areas</th>
<th>Characteristic Behaviours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Severe and sustained impairment in social interaction</td>
<td>• Has difficulty interacting with peers and adults; typically demonstrates one-sided and eccentric social behaviours</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Has difficulty reading and understanding social situations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• No significant general delay in language acquisition, but difficulties with more subtle aspects of social communication</td>
<td>• Learns words and phrases at the typical age, but displays difficulties with conversational skills (e.g., misunderstanding and misusing non-verbal communications, monopolizing conversations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Restricted, repetitive, and stereotypical patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities</td>
<td>• Displays obsessions or preoccupations with specific themes or interests, often to the exclusion of other activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• No significant delay, if any, in cognitive development or in the development of age-appropriate self-help skills, adaptive behaviour, and curiosity about the environment in childhood</td>
<td>• Adheres inflexibly to rules or non-functional routines</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Has repetitive motor mannerisms, such as hand or finger flapping</td>
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</table>
The most significant differences between students with Asperger’s Disorder and those in whom another ASD is diagnosed are that these students generally are considered higher functioning in many areas and do not have clinically significant delays in the development of early language or cognitive skills. Early language skills, such as using single words and spontaneous communication phrases, are usually within normal limits and in some cases may be seen as advanced or precocious during the preschool years. Many students with Asperger’s Disorder have average intellectual abilities, and they may perform as well as or better than typical students in some academic areas, especially those that involve rote memory skills such as the recall of factual information.

Although students with Asperger’s Disorder typically have been found to have average or above-average cognitive skills, they often display subtle but important differences in cognitive processing abilities. These students usually have the cognitive abilities to learn information but may have difficulties in:

- comprehending complex or abstract information;
- learning and using the information in the context of the social environment of schools;
- problem solving;
- generalizing knowledge and skills.

However, students in whom Asperger’s Disorder is diagnosed have a severe social deficit, which makes understanding and using age-appropriate social behaviours and social communication skills difficult. They often have difficulty learning social skills incidentally by watching and interacting with others, and often misunderstand social situations. These difficulties affect the development of friendships and relationships with peers and adults.
Students with Asperger’s Disorder usually speak fluently and are able to use routine language for social interactions. However, difficulties are common with social communication skills such as the following:

• communicating with others (e.g., talking *at* rather than *with* others)
• using social rules of conversation (e.g., turn taking and listening to others)
• initiating and maintaining extended conversations
• changing topics in conversations
• using and understanding non-verbal communication skills (e.g., facial expressions)
• comprehending the social context or multiple meanings of language
• using common speech patterns (e.g., inflection or pitch)

Some students with Asperger’s Disorder have a preoccupation and heightened interest in a specific topic of interest in which they become very knowledgeable. They are intensely motivated to gather and share a great deal of detailed information on this topic. However, the social communication difficulties of the student usually affect the student’s ability to recognize or respond to the interest level of the audience with whom the information is being shared.

Usually, students in whom Asperger’s Disorder is diagnosed do not have clinically significant delays in the development of age-appropriate self-help skills. However, the effects of unusual behaviours and impairments in social interaction can cause significant impairments in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Motor coordination difficulties that may affect fine motor and gross motor skills, as well as organizational skills, are areas of concern for some students.

Similar to students with other disorders, students in whom Asperger’s Disorder is diagnosed are a diverse group, and impairments can vary according to the individual and situations or tasks. Some students with Asperger’s Disorder have the cognitive skills to successfully complete postsecondary programs and enter...
the workforce as relatively independent adults. The self-sufficiency skills of others may be significantly affected by impairments in adapting to social situations. Younger students may have little or no interest in establishing friendships. Adolescents, however, may have an interest in establishing friendships but experience social isolation because of difficulties with age-appropriate reciprocal social skills.

The difficulties that students with Asperger’s Disorder have in academic or social situations often increase or become more obvious during adolescence. As students at this stage are expected to learn, analyse, and use more abstract and complex information, the difficulties of students with Asperger’s Disorder have an increased effect on their participation in learning activities. They often become aware of their social or academic difficulties or differences, and as a result become self-conscious or anxious in social and academic situations. Some students develop a sense of social isolation in adolescence, with increased anxieties, depression, or withdrawn behaviours.

It is not unusual for the behaviours of students with Asperger’s Disorder to be misinterpreted by adults and peers. For example, a student may be able to read advanced books on a topic of interest but unable to read another book at the same reading level on a topic of limited interest to the student. This may be seen as a behaviour that demonstrates deliberate task avoidance or refusal.

Because of the strengths and “normally” developing skills that students with Asperger’s Disorder may have, the impairments and difficulties in social and behavioural functioning can be overlooked or misunderstood. These students often want to establish friendships or relate to others but may not have developed the appropriate skills, and their interactions or responses are perceived as being unusual. For example, in an attempt to be accurate or honest or to converse with others, a student may make an observational comment that is considered offensive or inappropriate to others. Students with Asperger’s Disorder may be unaware of the impact on others of what they are saying or doing, and are at an increased risk of becoming victims of teasing and bullying by peers.
In many cases, a diagnosis of Asperger’s Disorder is not made until the student is in school and impairment in the development of age-appropriate social behaviours becomes more evident. Some students with Asperger’s Disorder may be in school for several years before what have been seen as unusual or odd behaviours are recognized as characteristics of a disorder.

**Strategies to Develop and Enhance Student Skills**

Many of the strategies that have been found effective for teaching students with ASD may also be effective for students with Asperger’s Disorder. The following strategies specifically address some of the common characteristics and difficulties of students with Asperger’s Disorder. It is important that the learning profile and strengths and needs of the individual student be considered in determining the strategies that will be most effective for the student.

**Social Interactions**

- Provide explicit or direct teaching of social rules and skills.
- Break social situations into a sequence of steps.
- Model or script steps within social interactions.
- Provide a variety of opportunities for the student to understand, recognize, and practise social rules and skills. Examples include:
  - Establishing structured and unstructured opportunities for the student to socialize with peers (e.g., lunch program, small group outings) through a circle of friends, peer partners, or buddies
  - Planning cooperative group activities
  - Providing opportunities for the student to interact with others in a shared interest (e.g., a hobby).
- Identify for the student what is happening and why.
- Encourage the student to monitor and provide feedback about social actions of self and others.
- Use video- or audiotapes of social interactions to identify, analyse, predict, or teach specific verbal social skills (e.g., “What is he doing?” “What did he say?”) and non-verbal social skills.
- Provide opportunities to generalize social skills by rehearsing across a variety of settings with various individuals, including highly structured to less structured to real-life situations (in school, home, and community).
Social Communications

• Provide explicit teaching to help the student recognize, understand the meaning of, and use non-verbal communications (e.g., gestures, facial expressions).
• Practise using social communication skills with peers and adults.
• Provide cues and prompts (e.g., visual cues for initiating conversations, your turn/my turn cards).
• Use clear, specific language.
• Explain language that is confusing for the student, and provide examples and opportunities to learn and use language (e.g., metaphors, words with multiple meanings).
• Teach the student how to monitor his or her own understanding and request that information be repeated or clarified.
• Check with the student to determine understanding; be aware of messages that the student may find unclear or misinterpret.
• Provide opportunities for role playing and rehearsal of conversations in predicted social situations (e.g., turn taking in conversations).

Limited Range of Interests

• Provide the student with a scheduled time to engage in preferred activities.
• Provide the student with varied and meaningful opportunities to use knowledge of an area.
• Incorporate other activities gradually and prepare the student for a change in activities.
• Encourage participation in new activities by connecting new activities to an area of interest.

Motor Coordination

• Use technology to enhance written output.
• Provide structured instruction for motor tasks (e.g., how to tie shoelaces).
• Provide additional opportunities for the student to practise motor tasks.
• Provide alternatives or accommodations when possible (e.g., use fill-in-the-blank activities, provide additional time).

Anxiety

• Provide the student with a method to recognize, rate, and monitor anxiety (e.g., thermometer; rating scale; colour-coded sequence to indicate green = okay, red = not okay).
• Teach self-calming or relaxation techniques (e.g., listening to music, taking deep breaths).
• Provide scheduled opportunities as needed to make the environment less stressful (e.g., student “downtime” doing a pre-selected, calming activity).
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety (continued)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Be aware of and prepare the student for anxiety-causing situations (e.g., provide advance warning, teach coping strategies).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Monitor and respond to signs of teasing or bullying from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide the student with strategies to recognize and respond to teasing or bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide reassurance and positive feedback to reinforce the student’s efforts and accomplishments.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Organizational Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Provide training or assistance with specific, individualized strategies to help the student be organized (e.g., use input from the student to set up a coded binder system to help keep track of and organize notes).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Build an organizational system into routines (e.g., weekly tidying of locker or desk).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use visual supports to organize information and materials (e.g., visual schedule, homework checklist, graphic organizer, colour- or picture-coded binder sections).</td>
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