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# Educating Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the General Education Classroom- Elementary Level (Part 1)

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# Presentation Goals

- ❑ Identify the diagnostic criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).
  - ❑ Identify unique learning characteristics of students with ASD.
  - ❑ Identify research based educational methodologies and strategies.
  - ❑ Develop an understanding of communication, sensory processing and behavioral challenges.
  - ❑ Identify and discriminate the roles of each service provider in an educational setting.
  - ❑ Partner with parents, special education staff and district support teams.
  - ❑ Explore educational resources.
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# Diagnostic Criteria for ASD

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is considered a form of Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) and includes Autism and Asperger syndromes.
- ASD is a neurological disorder.
- Three primary core deficits must be present in order for the child to be considered having ASD:
  - Qualitative Impairment in Verbal and Nonverbal Communication;
  - Qualitative Impairment in Reciprocal Social Interactions;
  - Restricted and Repetitive Interests and Behaviors.

*\*DSM IV-R, American Psychiatric Association, (2000)*

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# Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

- Delay or lack of development of spoken language not accompanied by gestures or mime
  - When speech is present, impairment in ability to initiate and/or sustain a conversation
  - Repetitive use of language
  - Unusual prosody
  - Lack of varied, spontaneous make-believe play and social imitative play
  - Abnormality with initiating communication with others
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# Reciprocal Social Interactions

- ❑ Impairment in the use of multiple nonverbal behaviors
  - ❑ Impaired social-emotional understanding
  - ❑ Difficulty with emotional contagion
  - ❑ Lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests and achievements
  - ❑ Lack of social and emotional reciprocity
  - ❑ Lack of coordination of gaze, facial expression, gestures and sounds
  - ❑ Infrequent monitoring of other's focus of attention
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# Restrictive and Repetitive Interests and Behaviors

- ❑ Restricted or repetitive play
  - ❑ Repetitive movements or posturing of body, arms, hands or fingers
  - ❑ Repetitive movements with objects
  - ❑ Unusual toy play
  - ❑ Persistent preoccupation with parts of objects
  - ❑ Insistence on sameness including adaptive or maladaptive routines
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# Differential Diagnosis (It may not be Autism)

- Rett Syndrome
  - Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
  - Selective Mutism
  - Attention Disorders
  - Non-verbal Learning Disability
  - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
  - Anxiety
  - Communication Disorders including Echolalia
  - Pragmatic Language Disorder
  - Mental Retardation
  - Stereotypical Movement Disorders
  - Sensory Integration-Sensory Modulation Disorders
  - Schizophrenia
  - Hearing Deficits
  - Gross and Fine Motor Deficits
  - Poor Eye Contact
  - Restricted Range of Interests
  - Also consider:
    - Environmental Deprivation
    - Primary Language
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# Medical Conditions in ASD

- Seizures
  - Gastrointestinal difficulties
  - Sleep disorders
  - Metabolic disease
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# Genetic Conditions that may Coexist with ASD

- Tuberos Sclerosis
  - Fragile X
  - Down Syndrome
  - Neurofibromatosis
  - Angelman Syndrome
  - Prader-Willi Syndrome
  - Variety of other syndromes
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# Asperger Syndrome vs Autism

## □ Functioning Level

- Social
- Cognitive / Academic Achievement
- Communication (normal communicative development vs. delays)
- Motor delays and/or clumsiness

## □ Restricted Range of Interest

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# Asperger Syndrome

- Termed “little professors” – vocabulary and intelligence may mask their disability
  - Cognitive level may not match their social acuity
  - Vulnerable to bullies – Theory of Mind
  - Incessant questioning
  - Hyper focus on restricted interest
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# Why do we need to educate children with ASD differently?

- Differences in Thinking, Understanding and Learning
  - Visual Learners vs. Auditory Learners
  - Difficulty with Theory of Mind
  - Difficulty with Abstract and Flexible Thinking (Concrete)
  - Difficulty with Sequencing and Organization
  - Difficulty with Generalization
  - Difficulty Understanding and Using Nonverbal Language
  - Difficulty Interpreting Social Experiences
  - Difficulty Discerning Relevant Details
  - Distractibility – Internal and External
  - Difficulty Combining/Integrating Ideas
  - Difficulty Learning Through Imitation

*\*Mesibov, G. & Shae, V. Division TEACCH, *The Culture of Autism: From Theoretical Understanding to Educational Practice*. [www.teacch.org](http://www.teacch.org)*

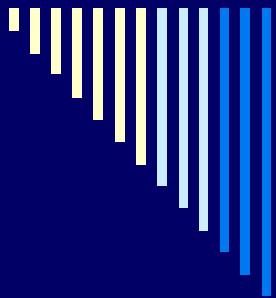
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# Why Educate Differently- continued

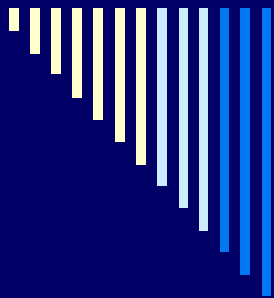
- Appropriate and individualized educational strategies, which are based on research, support not only the development of academic skills, but also reduce anxiety, distractibility and behavioral disruptions – which makes your job easier.
  - Calm and organized children are more available to learn.
  - Case Law!
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# Videos

- Rain Man
  - The Office
  - Law Enforcement
  - [YouTube](#)
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# Research Based Methodologies

- ABA – Applied Behavioral Analysis
  - Based on work by B.F. Skinner
  - Commonly used strategies in schools
  - Ivar Lovaas methodologies based on Skinner's work
    - Discrete trial interventions
    - Specific teaching protocols
    - Advocate for minimum of 40 hours of intervention per week

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# Methodologies Continued

- Applied Verbal Behavior (AVB)
    - Based on Skinner's research of the development of verbal behaviors
  
  - Relationship Development Intervention
    - Relational social skills vs. instrumental social skills
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# Methodologies Continued

- ❑ Social Stories
  - ❑ Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
  - ❑ Greenspan (DIR)
  - ❑ Sensory Integration
  - ❑ Integrated Play Groups (IGP)
  - ❑ Biomedical Treatments
  - ❑ Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH)
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# Focus of Educational Programs for Students with ASD

- Functional and spontaneous use of language
  - Social skills (across settings)
  - Academic skills
  - Play/leisure skills
  - Fine and gross motor skills
  - Sensory processing
  - Independence
  - Generalization
  - Adaptive behavior
  - Organizational skills
  - Self advocacy
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# References

Mesibov, G. & Shae, V. Division TEACCH, *The Culture of Autism: From Theoretical Understanding to Educational Practice*. [www.teacch.org](http://www.teacch.org)

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*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV-R, American Psychiatric Association, 2000*

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