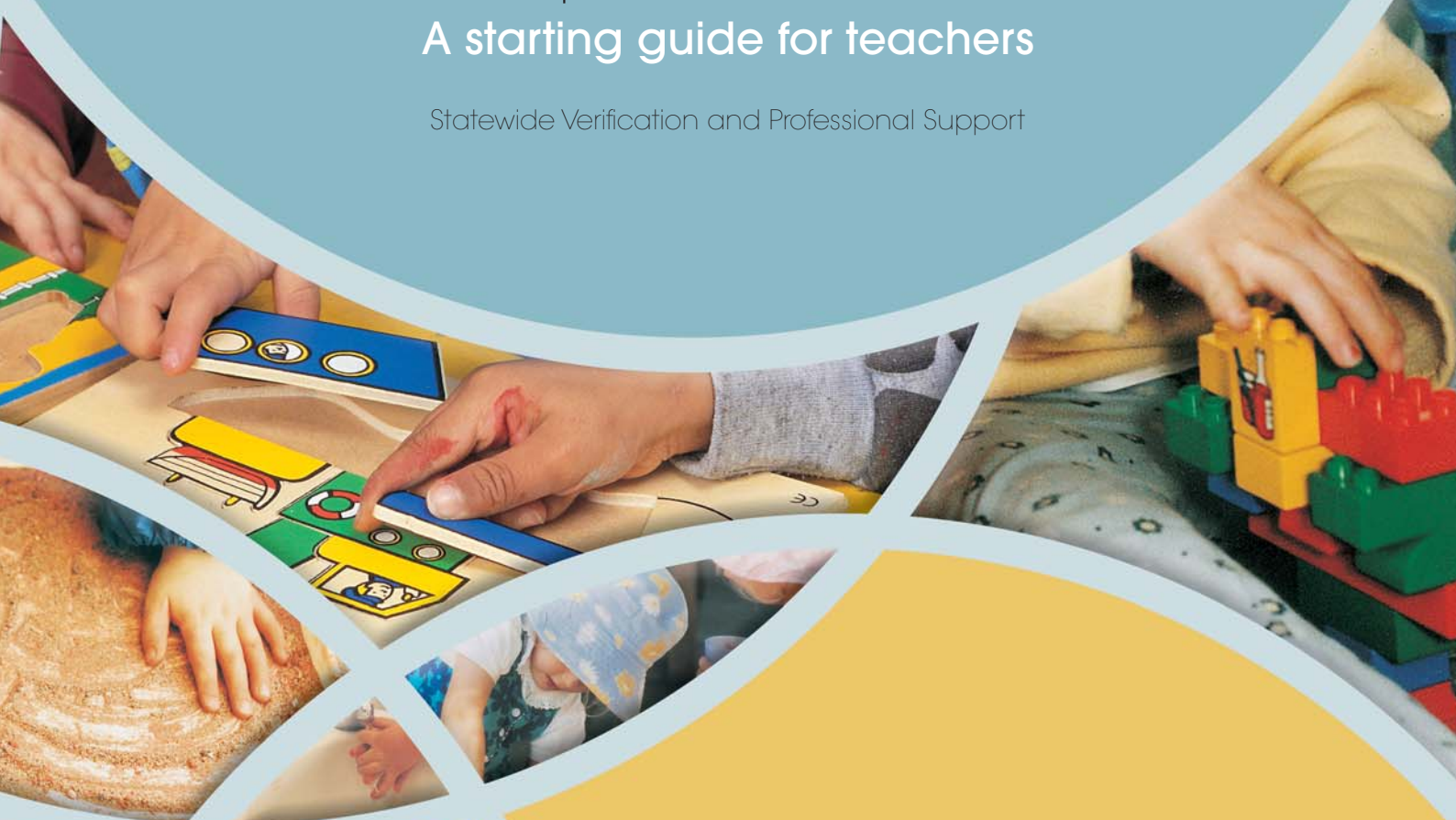


# autism

## Autism Spectrum Disorders A starting guide for teachers

Statewide Verification and Professional Support



**Government of South Australia**  
Department of Education and  
Children's Services

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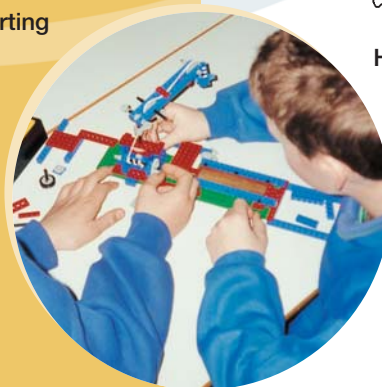
### Resources teachers recommend [Video]

#### PowerPoint slideshows

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- Using visual strategies in classrooms

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# Foreword

As a teacher, you will be well aware that early intervention can make an enormous difference to the capacity of every child to achieve their potential in life.

By being better informed, and making connections with families and support services in our communities, you are better equipped to guide, teach and enable each child to have a better start.

This guide is designed to help you support children in your classroom who have been newly identified with Autistic Disorder and Asperger's Disorder.

Central to the practical advice and information in this guide is the recognition that you are not alone.

The guide highlights the value of making connections and partnerships with families, agencies and your colleagues to foster successful learning opportunities and outcomes for each child.

While the South Australian Government works in partnership with the Commonwealth Government to fund and assist children with an autism spectrum disorder, it is the commitment and professionalism of teachers working with families and agencies that make a real difference.

The guide offers a good start when you have a student with an **Autism Spectrum Disorder** in your class.

You may already know about Autism Spectrum Disorders and have many teaching skills that support students. The guide may help you:

- increase your understanding and knowledge
- begin planning for your student
- enable you to make connections with further resources and people who may be of help.

I commend the guide to you, and thank the many people and agencies who have contributed in the best interests of every child.

**Hon Jane Lomax-Smith MP**  
Minister for Education and  
Children's Services

# What are Autism Spectrum Disorders?

The autistic spectrum includes a range of disorders, the most common being autism (also known as Autistic Disorder), and Asperger syndrome (also known as Asperger's syndrome or Asperger's Disorder). Although these disorders share common features, their presentation and severity of symptoms vary in each person across a spectrum of cognitive, social and communicative abilities and behavioural patterns. The pattern and extent of difficulties can also change over time.

Recent research by the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) suggests that although there is considerable variation in estimates of incidence of ASD in each state and territory, the prevalence across Australia is approximately 62.5 per 10 000 population. This translates to one child in every 160 children (aged 6–12 years) having an ASD (MacDermott et al, 2007) or over 10 000 primary aged students in Australia, which is consistent with international trends. This incidence level makes ASD more common than the *combined* number of children with cerebral palsy, diabetes, deafness, blindness and leukaemia.

Autism and Asperger syndrome are present very early in a child's development and usually have lifelong effects on the development of social relationships, community participation and education. Diagnosis of ASD is based on deficits occurring in the three major areas of communication, social skills and repertoire of play, hobbies and interests.

Cognitive difficulties often occur alongside ASD, and communication and language are consistently affected. Difficulties with motor coordination and organisational skills are also common. There are often sensory sensitivities resulting from the way the brain interprets sensory information (responses to sounds, touch, light, smells, tastes and textures). People with autism can experience overwhelming anxiety, frustration and confusion when faced with making sense of the everyday demands of life.

The cause for autism is unknown and, while there is no cure, there are treatments and strategies that are effective for improving the lives of children with autism.

## Support plan

To assist you in catering for the individual needs of a child, the use of an **Autistic Disorder/Asperger's Disorder Support Plan**, as a supportive document to the Negotiated Education Plan (NEP), is strongly recommended (see Appendix). The development of this support plan helps to organise all the information gathered about the student and identify key areas for consideration in his/her education such as:

- **Safety and wellbeing**
- **Sensory sensitivities/anxiety and stress**
- **Strengths/interests/skills/motivations**
- **Challenges**
- **Social interaction**
- **Communication/literacy and numeracy**
- **Behaviour and supervision for safety**
- **Training requirements for staff.**

## Links

Autism SA website: <http://www.autismsa.org.au>

NEP on SERU website: <http://web.seru.sa.edu.au>

Australian Advisory Board on ASD:  
<http://www.autismaus.com.au/aca/pdfs/PrevalenceReport.pdf>



## Getting information

So ... I have a student in my class with autism, what do I do?

- 1. Parents/caregivers** are a valuable source of information and support, so talking with them and building positive relationships early in your contact with them is crucial. Effective communication between school staff and families helps everyone involved share an up-to-date understanding of how an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) impacts on the individual student and his/her family, teacher and school context. This understanding supports identification of successes and difficulties and makes joint problem solving easier and more effective.
- 2. Read relevant assessment reports**, so that you can be clear about the student's diagnosis (ie autism/Asperger) and the implications of ASD for the specific child. If the student has been verified, it is likely that the school guidance officer and/or speech pathologist will have already collected a considerable amount of information that you can discuss. It is clear that, although people with ASD share many common issues, what these 'look like' can be very different for each unique individual. How we respond to a student with ASD, therefore, needs to be tailored to the individual person and often also to the specific situation.
- 3. Seek out information** that is available from the student's last education setting, such as talking with last year's class teacher or preschool teacher, and reading any plans that were in place. It is particularly helpful to get some ideas about the varying strategies and flexible approaches that made the most difference to the child's success and wellbeing—that is, both the strategies that worked and the ones that didn't.
- 4. Your Disability Coordinator** may also be able to support you in developing plans around intervention, managing change, curriculum provisions and providing resources. The Disability Coordinator can be contacted through referral from the school to support services at the local district education office, which can be found through the DECS website at <http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/locs/>.
- 5. Find out if the student is registered for services from the Autism SA 'School Program'** and seek permission from parents/caregivers to contact them. You may want to know what services are routinely available, as well as what support can be offered if you feel you are 'getting stuck'. The Autism SA consultant who is allocated to your school will automatically be notified of a new client.

**The Autism SA Info Line is available on 1300 288 476.**

**The DECS Special Needs Education Helpline is available on 1800 222 696.**

Autism is a fascinating yet challenging area which is still being researched worldwide. The more you read, the more training you attend, the more you will grow in your understanding of the disorder, which will help you set up your classroom program for success!

*Parents/caregivers are a valuable source of information and support, so talking with them and building positive relationships early in your contact with them is crucial.*



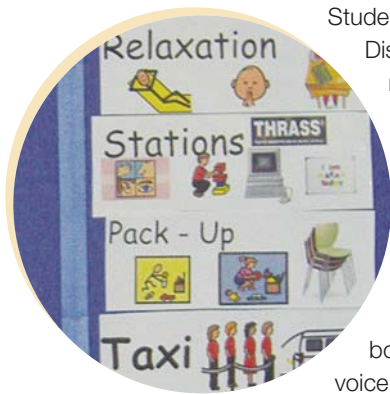


# Key skill areas

## Communication

Communication means how you get messages across and how you understand or interpret what other people mean. We communicate in many ways. We talk, we use facial expressions, we use gestures, we change our tone of voice, we interpret symbols and we access written language as well.

Very often, our ability to understand what is required or what is meant is intuitive—we just know what people mean and we know what is expected of us in different situations. For example, we know to line up at the check-out, without standing too close to the person in front, usually without talking to them unless we know them and gradually moving forward as the line progresses until we have our turn taking our goods through the checkout.



Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) experience a range of communication difficulties. The first and most pervasive problem is difficulty with this kind of intuitive understanding. People with ASD do not 'read' social cues, including reading facial expressions, body language and tone of voice. Authors describe this as the *hidden curriculum* of life and school and point out the need to explicitly teach these social responses and understandings.

Students with ASD also have difficulty using and understanding spoken language, although there is a huge variation in the actual communication skills of each individual. Students may or may not understand spoken language and it is important to be clear about not only how much speech the student understands but what happens to their understanding in situations of stress. Understanding language requires much greater effort on the part of the student with ASD so he/she will find comprehension more difficult in situations where his/her attention is divided amongst several things; for example, while working on the computer, or when stressed, or when involved in physical activities. In these situations, you will need to know how to get the student's attention and how best to communicate information. Visual strategies will be a critical part of your communication.

An estimated 14 per cent of children with ASD will not develop spoken language (Lord, 2007) so will be relying on other systems of communication. This includes not only what the student *does* (eg using PECS or other symbol systems) but also *how adults interpret* the student's behaviour (eg a student whose hand mannerisms might indicate they are becoming stressed).

When children with ASD do develop verbal communication, it is likely they will still need visual strategies to support their understanding and their expression of thoughts and ideas. Improved communication often reduces the incidence of challenging behaviour and is critical to learning and socialising at school.

**Speech pathologists** provide support for communication issues. Find out if your student is supported by a DECS district speech pathologist, a private practitioner, Autism SA or other agency.

Some further reading in this area:

- ***Autism Spectrum Disorder and Communication in the Special Education Classroom.*** Michelle Homewood, 2004
- ***Visual Strategies for Improving Communication: Practical Supports for School and Home.*** L Hodgdon, 1995
- ***The Social Skills Picture Book: Teaching Play, Emotion and Communication to Children with Autism.*** Jed Baker, 2001
- ***The Hidden Curriculum. Practical Solutions for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations.*** Brenda Smith Myles, M Trautman, R Schelvan, 2004

People with ASD do not 'read' social cues, including reading facial expressions, body language and tone of voice... (and)... have difficulty using and understanding spoken language, although there is a huge variation in the actual communication skills of each individual.

## Key skill areas

### Social interaction

Social interaction and the development of social skills can be major areas of difficulty experienced by people with ASD. In her keynote address at the 2007 Biennial Australian Conference on Autism Spectrum Disorder, Professor Rita Jordan outlined several components of these social difficulties, including:

- Core difference in early development which impacts both communication and social flexibility
- Difficulty interpreting social signals as they are not salient to people with ASD
- Poor sense of agency, that is difficulty understanding the impact that we and other people have on the world and each other
- Lack of an intuitive base to understanding which is even present in babies who do not react to adults in the automatic ways that lead to social learning (eg smiling when smiled at)
- Mutual issues in that non-ASD individuals do not intuitively understand people with ASD and vice versa. In other words, ASD and non-ASD people interact with and understand the world differently, so we both need to explicitly learn how 'the other' sees the world. This means that intuitive approaches to teaching (the ways we do things without having to think about it) may not work.

Social relationship and interaction difficulties are generally considered to arise from 'theory of mind' issues (Frith & Happe, 1994; Baron-Cohen, 1995) in conjunction with the effect of communication impairments. Theory of mind relates to difficulties with social perception; that is, understanding situations from another person's point of view, or having a different perspective on many social situations. Frith and Happe also relate this difficulty to lack of central cohesion—an inability to synthesise fragments of information into meaningful wholes. Don't *assume* understanding from people with ASD! For more information see **Theory of Mind** (Edelson, 1995).



Visual strategies are a critical and life-long support strategy to help with social understanding and the grasp of social skills. For example, they can be used to assist with choice making or in developing social stories to teach adaptive behaviours and appropriate social skills. There are many excellent resources to support social understanding and learning, and to assist in teaching the skills for a student to be successful. For example:

- **The Social Skills Picture Book: Teaching Play, Emotion and Communication to Children with Autism.** Jed Baker, 2001
- **Social Skills Picture Book for High School and Beyond.** Jed Baker, 2006
- **Revealing the Hidden Social Code: Social Stories™ for People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.** M Howley & E Arnold, 2005
- **Autism and PDD Social Skills Lessons** (various titles). P Reese, 1999–2002
- **Asperger's: What Does It Mean to Me?** (self-awareness) Catherine Faherty, 2000
- **Playing It Right! Social Skills Activities for Parents and Teachers of Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Including Asperger Syndrome and Autism.** R Barekat, 2006
- **The New Social Story Book: Illustrated Edition.** C Gray, 2000
- **My Social Stories Book.** C Gray & AL White, 2002
- **Visual Tools Database CD** (Uses Boardmaker for developing visual strategies, schedules, timetables and social stories, and requires the Boardmaker program to be loaded onto your computer. A subscription is required for Boardmaker.) Information from SERU.

## Key skill areas

### Behaviour and sensory issues

Gathering information about the student's motivations and potential problems or 'stressors' from the Autistic Disorder/Asperger's Disorder Support Plan is a good start to looking at your student's behaviour issues. Ask the questions 'What motivates the behaviour and what does it achieve?' and 'What environmental factors are causing anxiety or stress for the student?'

**Behaviour** can often be attributed or related to:

- **Sensory** sensitivities (touch, light, sound, smells, textures, stimulation etc) or overload
- **Movement disorder** (vestibular movement)—an inability to control one's movements
- **Change to routine** (sudden unpredicted), especially at transition times
- **Anxiety or stress, state of arousal** (note the individual causes for each person)
- **Organisation** or lack of organisation in their world
- Lack of **social perception** leading to the student being misunderstood or set up (see theory of mind), bullying, harassment (especially in the yard)
- **Rigidity** in thinking, wanting to have control over environment
- **Inability to express feelings** or emotions, communication difficulties
- **Processing of language**—unable to 'tune in' to or focus on verbal instructions
- The **teaching environment**—teach what you want the student to do
- Being confronted or invasion of personal space—**wanting to escape**.

Children with autism can be either over- or under-sensitive to sensory input such as noise, bright lights, the feel of certain textures or being touched. They may become distressed with sudden or loud noises or show agitation when there is a lot of activity around and wish to escape. Their state of arousal may increase or decrease. They may seek sensory input. Having a 'sensory' area set up for relaxation, calming and de-stressing activities is a good idea—low lighting, simple furniture, no distractions and low noise. Also, build regular movement and break times into the day's timetable.

Dr Tony Attwood has produced two practical classroom strategy books which help develop programming for behaviour issues: *Exploring Feelings—Anger* (2005) and *Exploring Feelings—Anxiety* (2005).

See also *Perfect Targets: Asperger Syndrome and Bullying. Practical Solutions for Surviving the Social World* (Heinrichs, 2003).

Using a variety of visual strategies (see previous page) is highly recommended when teaching specific behaviour skills to the student. Having visual schedules, timetables, visual reward systems and using social stories are popular strategies to use for proactive behaviour management.

A referral to the district **Student Inclusion and Wellbeing Interagency Behaviour Management Coordinator** may be useful if you need additional help or advice for behavioural strategies. A coordinated team approach is recommended to address behaviour issues, using Autism SA teacher consultants, the school guidance officer and disability coordinators as part of the overall process.

The *Positive Practices* newsletters, edited by LaVigna and Willis, provide positive programming plans and strategies to support the behaviour of students with autism. LaVigna and Willis recommend looking at the 'function' or motivation behind behaviour, the use of non-aversive strategies, positive teaching skills (the *dos* rather than the *don'ts*) and positive reinforcement schedules. Skills the student may be lacking need to be *taught explicitly* using schedules of reinforcement or reward systems for developing adaptive behaviours. These are a part of the recommended multi-element support plan. See *The NAMB Project 2005: Non-aversive Approaches to Managing Behaviour* (see resources section of the SVPST website at <http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/svpst>).

Other useful resources are *Solving Behavior Problems in Autism* (Hodgdon, 1999) and Williams and Shellenberger's *How Does Your Engine Run?* (The ALERT program).

Autism SA also has a range of information sheets on their website:

- No 4: Challenging Behaviour
- No 6: Inappropriate Behaviours
- No 16: Obsessions.

Information from the NEP or support plan can be used to identify a motivation for the student to complete non-preferred work tasks first, to shape behaviour and negotiate compliance with work tasks and activities. See **Motivating Students Who Have Autism Spectrum Disorders** at <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/education/motivate.html>.

## Key services

### Special Education Resource Unit (SERU)

**Phone** (08) 8235 2871

**Website** <http://web.seru.sa.edu.au>

SERU is a DECS support centre that provides a range of learning and teaching materials, resources and specialised services to support children and students with disabilities and learning difficulties. SERU can provide advice and support in a variety of ways. Resources are available for loan to preschool/school staff and parents/caregivers.

SERU has an information sheet about how to access resources and articles from databases through **online services**. Other information sources on the website include SERU website links, journal articles and current awareness issues.

Resources available through SERU include:

- Curriculum resources and professional texts
- Sensory resources/toys
- DVDs and videos
- Cause and effect/Switch toys
- Disability awareness resources
- Visual strategies training provided by the Communication and Language Disorder Support Service
- Boardmaker program support.

*The use of visual strategies, schedules, signs, cards etc is highly recommended for students within the autism spectrum in all aspects of school life. Visual supports can be used to help understanding, show what is required, show what will happen (eg timetables), support communication including making choices, encourage independence, provide reassurance, teach social skills and support development of appropriate classroom behaviour.*

Information and communication technology (ICT), assistive technology equipment and access equipment are provided through a specific request and approval process. (Clicker 5 is an excellent program.)

### Autism SA

**Website** <http://www.autismsa.org.au>

The Resource Centre at Autism SA has great reading lists and books, resources, videos and DVDs available. Contact the **Autism SA Info Line: 1300 288 476**.

Parents/caregivers and teachers are able to borrow books, toys and a variety of resources from the Autism SA Resource Centre.

- See their booklet ***An Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders***.
- Their resource catalogue is available on their website <http://www.autismsa.org.au>.

The following information sheets are also available from the Autism SA website.

Relaxation—pdf 14kb

Arousal: Does the Level Fit the Task?—pdf 12kb

Awareness of Boundaries—pdf 11kb

Challenging Behaviours—pdf 10kb

Developing Understanding and Expression of Object Names—pdf 21kb

Inappropriate Behaviours—pdf 10kb

Gravitational Insecurity—pdf 21kb

Early Communication Skills—pdf 14kb

Preschool Holidays—pdf 9kb

Imitation Skills—pdf 18kb

Coping with Change—pdf 10kb

Prompting and Fading—pdf 16kb

Reinforcement—pdf 11kb

Mouthing—pdf 11kb

No Hat, No Play—pdf 11kb

Obsessions—pdf 10kb

Classroom Issues—pdf 26kb

Supporting Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Classroom—pdf 17kb

Eating Difficulties—pdf 26kb

Toileting—pdf 32kb

Sleeping Problems—pdf 20kb





## Key services

### Disability SA

Disability SA and Autism SA work in collaboration to support families and individuals with ASD. In metropolitan Adelaide, Disability SA provides a case management service for clients and families who are experiencing complex issues that require an intensive level of case management. In country SA, services vary from region to region.

Service information is available through the Department for Families and Communities services website:  
<http://www.familiesandcommunities.sa.gov.au/>.



## Starting resources

There are many sources of information that can provide you with a strong foundation to understanding the needs of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Most of these address both autism and Asperger syndrome, while some resources address Asperger syndrome as a specific group. Autism SA provides a far more comprehensive list than is included here. You may find it useful to ask their advice when choosing resources. Jessica Kingsley Publishers have a wide variety of books on autism and Asperger syndrome (<http://www.jkp.com/catalogue/index.php/cat/autism>) as do Book in Hand (<http://www.bookinhand.com.au/>).

The following list is referenced in detail in the 'References and resources' section of this document.

## Recommended autism resources

### Books

- **Autism: The Facts.** Simon Baron-Cohen & Patrick Bolton, 1993. A complete guide to autism for parents and the general public.
- **Understanding and Teaching Children with Autism.** Rita Jordan & Stuart Powell, 1995. Rita Jordan is considered an authority in this field and presented at a 2 day seminar in Adelaide in 2005.
- **Understanding Autism.** Susan Dodd, 2005
- **Understanding the Nature of Autism.** Janice E Janzen, 2003
- **Educating Children with Autism.** Catherine Lord & James McGee (Eds), 2001. This book explores: how diagnosis affects educational assessment and planning; support to families of children with autism; features of an effective program; preparation of school staff; and policy considerations.

### Personal accounts by people with autism

- **Emergence: Labeled Autistic.** Temple Grandin & Margaret Scariano, 1993
- **Nobody Nowhere: The Extraordinary Autobiography of an Autistic.** Donna Williams, 1992

- **Somebody Somewhere: Breaking Free from the World of Autism.** D Williams, 1994
- **Lucy's Story: Autism and Other Adventures.** L Blackman, 2001

### Social stories

- **My Social Stories Book.** Carol Gray & AL White (Eds), 2002
- **The New Social Story Book: Illustrated Edition.** Carol Gray, 2000
- **Revealing the Hidden Social Code: Social Stories for People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.** M Howley & E Arnold, 2005

### Reports and articles

- **Essential Components of Educational Programming for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.** Alberta Education, 2006, [http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/K\\_12/specialneeds/CEP\\_Autism\\_Spectrum\\_Disorder.pdf](http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/K_12/specialneeds/CEP_Autism_Spectrum_Disorder.pdf)
- **Secondary Schooling for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.** <http://www.macswd.sa.gov.au/>

There are many sources of information that can provide you with a strong foundation to understanding the needs of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).



## Starting resources

- **Early Intervention for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Guidelines for Best Practice.** M Prior & J Roberts, 2006, <http://www.health.gov.au>
- **Overview of Autism.** S Edelson, 1995, <http://autism.org/overview.html>
- **Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.** Alberta Learning, 2003, <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/specialneeds/autism/autism.pdf>
- **Understanding Autism** (transcript). Insight, SBS. 2006, <http://news.sbs.com.au/insight/archive.php?archive=1&artmon=8&arty=2006#>

### Practical classroom resources

- **In the Deep End.** Gail Ilott, 2005. Survival strategies for beginning teachers of students with ASD.
- **Autism for All Teachers.** J Gardner, J Grant & P Webb, 2003. A teacher's guide to working with students with ASD.

### Websites with broad information and resources

- **Autism SA:** <http://www.autismsa.org.au>  
Information about Autism Spectrum Disorders, frequently asked questions, Autism SA services, the resource centre, training and development and publications. Links to Autism SA brochures etc.
- **Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect):** <http://www.autismnsw.com.au/>
- **Autism Society of America:** <http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer>
- **Autism Education Network:** <http://autismeducation.net>



### Websites for practical classroom resources

- <http://www.suelarkey.com> Sue Larkey is a well known special education teacher, resource developer and presenter from NSW. Her website is full of practical ideas and resource suggestions.
- <http://annatullemans.com> Anna Tullemans is also well known as a consultant and author who specialises in Asperger and has developed some resources jointly with Sue Larkey. Her website recommends a range of resources, sensory toys and includes articles for teachers, SSOs and parents.
- <http://www.bry-backmanor.org/activitypages.html> Activity page booklets.
- <http://www.do2learn.com> Good for making schedules.
- <http://www.tinsnips.org> A variety of special education resources for teachers.
- <http://www.preschoolprintables.com> Preschool activities.
- <http://www.primarygames.com> Primary age games and activities.
- <http://www.cesa7.k12.wi.us/SPED/autism/05/visualexamplesindex.htm> Great visual examples of curriculum modifications for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- <http://www.teachers.tv/search/node/autism> Teachers TV from the UK has videos about teaching students with autism.
- <http://www.Polyxo.com> A good website for teaching students with autism.

### Personal accounts

- Home page of Isabella at <http://www.banoncom.com/isa/index.htm>
- Home page of Donna Williams at <http://www.donnawilliams.net>

### Videos

- **What is Autism?** Autism SA, 1990
- **Towards a Better Understanding: A Seminar by Professor Rita Jordan.** Autism SA, 2005
- **Autism. The Teen Years.** Autism Victoria, 2003

# Starting resources

## Asperger syndrome resources

### Books

- **Asperger Syndrome—What Teachers Need to Know.** M Winter, 2003
- **A Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome.** Tony Attwood, 2007
- **A Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time.** M Haddon, 2003. This is an essential, easy to read book for all ages to gain insight into a person with Asperger syndrome.
- **All Cats Have Asperger Syndrome.** K Hoopman, 2006. A delightful picture book.

### Personal accounts by people with Asperger syndrome

- **Congratulations! It's Asperger's Syndrome.** J Birch, 2003
- **Finding a Different Kind of Normal: Misadventures with Asperger Syndrome.** J Purkis, 2006
- **Freaks, Geeks and Asperger Syndrome: A User Guide to Adolescence.** L Jackson, 2002

### Report

- **Quality Educational Practices for Students with Asperger Syndrome.** MAC/SWD, 2006, <http://www.macswd.sa.gov.au/>. A comprehensive practical resource for all educators, which also gives school case studies.

### Websites

- **Tony Attwood's site** <http://www.tonyattwood.com.au>
- **Asperger Syndrome Australian Information Centre** School's package <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~rbmitch/Asperger2.htm>
- **10 Things You Need to Do After Diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome** <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~rbmitch/Asperger8.htm>

### Videos and DVDs

- **Understanding Asperger Syndrome.** M Prior, 2000
- **The Asperger Point of View.** Autism SA, 2005

... one child in every 160 children (aged 6–12 years) [have] an ASD (MacDermott et al, 2007) or over 10 000 primary aged students in Australia, which is consistent with international trends.





# DECS Disability Support Program

## Verification

Schools receive a variety of funding resources to support the diverse learning needs of students, including those with additional learning needs. The Disability Support Program (DSP) is one specific funding mechanism.

## To access the DSP:

### 1. Involve DECS Support Services

District support services, including guidance, speech pathology, disability coordinators and interagency behaviour management coordinators, are accessed through the support services referral process using the **SSRF02 form**. Students with Autistic Disorder or Asperger's Disorder who meet the DSP eligibility criteria can be verified by the DECS Guidance Officer or DECS Speech Pathologist as a Student with a Disability (**ED040 Verification form**).

2. **If the student is verified**, the district disability coordinator works with you and your school to discuss the student's needs and level of support and to help complete relevant paperwork (**ED040A Level of Support form**). This is part of the negotiated education process which includes the development of a Negotiated Education Plan (NEP) to map the curriculum accommodations and adjustments required for the student. Allocation of resources to the school may also result, depending on the student's support needs.

### 3. Negotiated Education Plan (NEP)

Your school is responsible for developing the student's NEP with the parent/caregiver. You will need to make accommodations, adjustments and modifications to the curriculum you deliver, according to the student's needs, and these need to be documented. The **DECS Autistic Disorder/Asperger's Disorder Support Plan** will help you to work through this planning process.

4. **If verification does not occur**, an Individual Education Planning (IEP) process is recommended. DECS support services staff can also assist with this process.

## And as part of curriculum planning:

### 5. Contact Autism SA (1300 288 476)

If your student is registered as a client with Autism SA, the Autism Spectrum Disorder Consultant or Teacher Consultant allocated to your student can discuss information, training and support options. Country and metropolitan support options may differ.

6. **Training sessions** are an efficient way to access information and often provide opportunities to talk with other teachers. Information about sessions is available on the Autism SA website (<http://www.autismsa.org.au>) and the SVPST calendar (<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/svpst>).

7. **Understand everyone's roles.** It is important to describe these roles at meetings so that all people involved with the student are clear about who is accountable for what aspects of support and intervention.

8. **Take a breath!** You may feel swamped with all the information and support offered at first, so take things one step at a time. Follow the support plan. Your confidence, knowledge and skills will grow as you work through issues, plan, and talk with family and support providers.

*You may feel swamped with all the information and support offered at first, so take things one step at a time. Follow the support plan.*



## What to do: A summary

1. Read and find out **basic information** to understand Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and the possible impact on your specific student.
2. Gather information about what **support services** are available and contact them.
3. Listen to **parents/caregivers** and develop a positive working relationship with them.
4. Contact **Autism SA's** Consultants or Consultant Teacher.
5. Organise **whole staff training and development** through your disability coordinator or Autism SA. Consider what information your school staff needs because a whole school commitment and common approach provide the best support for the student. TAFE runs certificate courses in ASD from some campuses.
6. Consider what classroom **curriculum modifications**, equipment or specialised areas for support will be needed using the recommended DECS Autistic Disorder/Asperger's Disorder Support Plan and Negotiated Education Plan.
7. **Structure your classroom** and consider the following checklist:
  - **Flexibility** of access for curriculum (choice, non-negotiables etc)
  - The **ecology of your classroom environment**. Be aware of:
    - *physical sensitivities* (sound, light, space)
    - *interpersonal factors* (expectations of others)
    - *philosophical factors* (discipline/control methods)
    - *program factors* (choice, predictability, method, needs and interests of students)
  - **Routines** and the strategies that need to be in place for when routines change
  - **Communication needs**, including adjustment to listening and speaking demands and the use of visual resources, timetables and schedules
  - Dealing with **anxiety** and/or **stress**, and **sensory sensitivities**
  - **Relaxation**/sensory areas and sensory equipment (stress balls etc)
8. **Read more, search** websites for information and **attend** training. Every day, new research, articles, strategies, new interventions and resources become available about ASD.

***We hope this has been a useful starter resource to help you continue your learning journey and plan for success!***



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# Autistic Disorder/Asperger's Disorder Support Plan

## for schools and preschools



Government  
of South Australia  
Department of Education  
and Children's Services

To be completed collaboratively by site, district support services and the parent/caregiver.

This plan is intended to be a guide to common issues for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Where other plans are in place, such as the Negotiated Education Plan (NEP), Individual Education Plan (IEP), Health Support Plans or Student Development Plan, there is no need to duplicate that information on this form.

Name of student \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth / / Age \_\_\_\_\_

Site name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of this plan / / Review in  1 term  6 months  other Date for next review / /

### Diagnosis

Autistic Disorder  Asperger's Disorder Date of diagnosis / / Diagnosed by \_\_\_\_\_

CURRENT SPECIALIST AND SUPPORT SERVICES	Describe involvement of services/support provided (eg names of services providers, how often seen, nature of their work)
---	---

- Autism SA
- DECS Support Services
- Speech pathologist
- Medical practitioner
- Other providers

SAFETY AND WELLBEING	Details
----------------------	---------

**Level of supervision required**

- Very high (risk, safety)
- Close supervision (small group)
- Moderate (some assistance)
- Low
- Independent

**Supervision required at**

- Break times
- Other

**Strategies in place for**

- Bullying
- Sleep disturbances
- Dietary requirements
- Other

Places, times supervision requirements apply

Sensory sensitivities	Management strategies (immediate and long-term)
-----------------------	---

- Light
- Touch
- Sound
- Taste/smell
- Textures
- Movement
- Other

**Anxiety and stress**

**Calming strategies—suggested response from staff**

(eg teaching strategies/modifications to the physical environment, preparation for change, personal space, relaxation techniques)

Significant stressors  
(eg noise, crowds, change, specific lessons)

What are signs of stress, including *earliest* signs?

Ways to manage/de-escalate stress (eg distracter menu, stress cards, how do I feel, preferred activities menu, exit cards, relaxation processes, special measures required, quiet time)

**Strengths interests/skills/motivations**

(eg favourite topics, obsessions, preferred activities, rewards)

**How they can be used effectively to support student**

**Challenges**

(eg issues, concerns, barriers to participation)

**Management and support strategies**

**SOCIAL INTERACTION**

**Implications for yard/classroom**

**Interaction and social skills**

- Socially competent
- Functionally social
- Engages with peers with support
- Can interact with familiar adults
- Group skill training required
- Needs high degree of support in social situations
- Specific skill programs required

**Specific social skills to be taught**

- Waiting, turn-taking
- Interaction with adults/peers
- Other  
List:

**Detail programs required**

**COMMUNICATION****Recommended support****Communication used by student**

- Language
- Gesture
- Behaviour
- Other

**Level of understanding**

- Verbal
- Preferred visual cues
- Extra processing time

**Adults need to**

- Say student's name for attention
- Offer choice
- Use simple instructions/key words
- Use picture cues
- Other

Include situations in which communication needs change (eg when stressed, the student may need information presented visually rather than verbally).

**LITERACY AND NUMERACY****Support and strategies (to be included in NEP)**

- Reading accuracy
- Reading comprehension, including written instructions
- Writing, including fine motor needs
- Specific programs
- Numeracy issues

**BEHAVIOUR ISSUES****Triggers****Management strategy****Supervision for safety/risk**

- Plan in place
- Plan to be developed
- Date    /    /

What reactive strategies are needed to safely manage 'melt-downs'?

What risk management strategies are required to manage potential crisis situations?



**ROUTINES****Details**

- School entry time
- Transition times
- Reminder cues
- Visual schedules required
- Break times
- School exit

**Communication with parents/caregivers**

- Scheduled meetings
- Written (eg e-mail, communication book)

**Communication with other school staff** (including TRTs)

- Availability of support plan
- Other

**Managing homework****Strategies**

- Amount given/maximum time spent on homework
- When given: Daily? Weekly?
- Communication of requirements with parents/caregivers
- Motivators

**Resources/technology required****Details****Recommended training for staff****In-service details**

- Class teacher(s)
- SSO
- Other support staff
- General school staff

**Additional information attached to this plan**

- Individual emergency plan
- Health Support Plan
- Other

**Participants involved in developing plan**

Date: / /

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# autism



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