



Teachers' Corner

Bringing Children with ASD to Life: Methods for Implementing Social Skills Training

Laurie Jacobs, CCC-SLP



As a speech pathologist working with children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), I've unfortunately met my share of lonely and frustrated children. Unlike their peers, children with ASD do not naturally acquire basic social skills, such as understanding the emotions and thoughts of others or establishing friendships, through general experience and observation. They're interested in social interaction and they want to have friends, but they simply don't know how to effectively use the nonverbal skills that make up 93% of the way we communicate. Because social skills are required everywhere, all the time, kids with ASD are faced with their inadequacies on a daily basis, which frequently results in anxiety, depression, social avoidance, academic difficulties, and problematic peer interactions.

Research by the Intragency Committee of Learning Disabilities and others has demonstrated that social skills training helps children with ASD approach normal functioning in their personal and academic lives. Social competence training techniques can be implemented in any and every environment, from school and home to community events and Internet chat rooms. But first, how can we determine whether a child is in need of such training? Formal methods include standardized testing, but I prefer to interview the child's caregiver and observe him interacting with his environment. Teachers can do this, too, by watching the child during unstructured activities, such as recess, and by using support staff to make note of break-down times.

In my practice, I apply several "low tech" (no technology) and "high tech" (using technology) devices to teach social skills. Some of the successful "low tech" applications are as follows:

- Create an "emotions" scrapbook using magazines and photographs.
- Employ social skill workbooks and board games, such as *Do Watch Listen Say* (Quill) and *Boardmaker* (Mayer-Johnson).
- Engage in one-to-one thematic and pretend play.
- Form social skill groups with the child's peers.
- Read single-themed social stories and comic strips with the child.
- Perform "social autopsies," dissecting social situations as they occur in a nonaccusatory, nonpunishing way.

(continued on p. 7)

Inside this issue . . .

President's Message	2
Join a DDD Committee	2
DDD at CEC	3
10th International DDD Conference	4
DDD Awards and Convention	
Proposal Reminders	4
Call for Papers 10th International	
DDD Conference	5
Students' Corner	6
News from the Diversity Committee	7
Executive Director's Corner	8
Membership and Unit Development	
Committee News	8
Editor's Note	8

Call for Papers

10th International DDD
Conference
Jan. 31–Feb. 2, 2007
Kona, Hawaii
(see page 5)



President's Message

Dagny Fidler

As 2006 gets underway, the DDD board is wrapping up things from 2005 and preparing for the annual convention in Salt Lake City, Utah. Mailings are now getting out to those who were affected by the hurricane, and our hopes are that everyone is now back on the road to a good recovery.

The Critical Issues committee continues to work on para-professional, alternate assessment, and highly qualified teacher issues and will have more work to do at the annual convention. If you are interested in participating in any of the discussions, check the convention schedule for the meeting time for this committee.

Phil Parette is making the final arrangements for DDD sessions and meetings in Salt Lake City. Our showcase session will address best practices as DDD prepares its new updated Best Practices book. More information on the session is included in "DDD at CEC" (p. 3).

The past few issues of the *DDD Express* have included articles by key presenters from last year's convention. I trust you are enjoying reading them. Because we know some of you are not able to attend the convention or get to all of the sessions you might want to at the convention, we will continue to feature key presenters from our sessions at the CEC convention and our DDD biennial conferences in the *DDD Express* and our journal, *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities*.



Our next biennial conference is just a year away! In case you have missed all of our announcements in the *DDD Express* now and previously, we will be meeting in Kona, Hawaii, at the Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort, January 31–February 2, 2007. Time to save up those frequent flyer miles.

Enjoy the anticipation of spring! See you in Salt Lake City.

JOIN A DDD COMMITTEE!

The following is a list of the **DDD Committees and Chairpersons** for 2005–2006. Contact any Committee Chairperson directly to obtain information and/or to **JOIN A COMMITTEE!**

MEET at CEC, Salt Lake City!
[See Schedule of Meetings and Events]

Committee(s)	Chairperson(s)	Contact(s)
Awards	Leslie Broun Cindy Perras	fljj@rogers.com cindy.perras@cogeco.ca
Communications	Darlene Perner	dperner@bloomu.edu
Conference	Phil Parette	hpparet@ilstu.edu
Critical Issues	Kent Gerlach Bob Stodden	kgerlach@plu.edu stodden@hawaii.edu
Diversity	Rosa Lockwood	rosa.lockwood@earthlink.net
Finance	Amanda Boutot	aboutot@mac.com
Legislative (CAN)	Bob Stodden	stodden@hawaii.edu
Membership/Unit Dev.	Joyce Agness Jim Forristal	jagness@mail.howard.k12.md.us jimfortpa@aol.com
Nominations	Barbara Gartin	bgartin@uark.edu
Publications	Jack Hourcade	jhourca@boisestate.edu

DDD at CEC

ATTENTION ... ATTENTION ... ATTENTION

The 2006 CEC Convention will be held in beautiful Salt Lake City, Utah, on April 5–8. The DDD board encourages all members to attend the conference, which will address best practices in teaching, current research, and other areas of interest to those involved with individuals identified with mental retardation/cognitive disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and related developmental disabilities (DD). Specific sessions will address (a) teaching play skills to children with DD, (b) managing behavior in inclusive settings, (c) using assistive technology for students with DD, (d) implementing comprehensive programming techniques for students with autism spectrum disorders, and (e) teaching effective communication strategies to students with DD. Check the CEC and DDD Web site for more information and important dates as they become available.

dents with DD/ASD); **Brenda Smith Myles**, University of Kansas (ASD: A Rapidly Changing Field for Practitioners); **John Wheeler**, Tennessee Tech University (Positive Behavior Supports for Persons with DD and ASD); **Toni Van Laarhoven**, Northern Illinois University (Curricula Issues and Students with DD/ASD); and **Dianne Berkell Zager**, Pace University (Transition Issues for Persons with DD/ASD).



DDD Showcase Session

Research-Based and Emerging Best Practices in Developmental Disabilities/Autism: Where Are We Going?

A range of important issues are currently affecting the field of developmental disabilities (DD)/autism, including self-determination, behavior management, curricula/transition planning and implementation, communication, assistive technology consideration, and working with families. This panel discussion will feature national experts with broad expertise within the field of DD/autism. Summaries of research and implications for current and future practitioners will be presented, with opportunities for participants to interact with the panel.



**Phil Parette, DDD
President Elect,
Showcase Session
Panel Moderator**

The panel will be moderated by **Phil Parette**, Illinois State University; panel participants and their topics will include **Mike Wehmeyer**, University of Kansas (Issues in Self Determination for Persons with DD/Autism Spectrum Disorder [ASD]); **George Peterson-Karlan**, Illinois State University (Communication Issues and Outcomes Monitoring for Stu-

DDD Schedule of Meetings and Events: Join Us!

Tuesday 4/4

Executive Committee Meeting: 7:00–8:30 pm

Wednesday 4/5

Board of Directors Meeting: 8:30 am–5:00 pm

Thursday 4/6

Showcase Session: 9:45–11:45 am
Critical Issues and Legislative Committee Meeting:
8:00–9:30 am
Subdivision Meeting: 12:00–1:00 pm
Awards Committee Meeting: 1:00–1:30 pm
Past Presidents' Meeting: 1:30–2:30 pm
General Business Meeting: 5:00–7:00 pm
President's Reception: 7:30–10:00 pm

Friday 4/7

Diversity Committee Meeting: 8:00–9:00 am
Membership Committee Meeting: 9:00–10:00 am
Conference Committee Meeting: 10:00–11:30 am
Publications Committee Meeting: 11:30 am–12:30 pm
Communications Committee Meeting: 12:30–1:30 pm

Saturday 4/8

Board of Directors Meeting: 8:30 am–12:00 pm



10th International DDD Conference

**Phil Parette,
President Elect**

The Board of the Division on Developmental Disabilities is pleased to extend an invitation to join us in Kona, Hawaii, January 31–February 2, 2007, for a singularly informative and entertaining professional development event! The conference will highlight key experts in the field, coupled with presentations by consumers with disabilities who bring a fresh, insightful perspective to our existing knowledge

base. Preconference workshops, educational tours/trips, and other activities are being considered to provide an array of opportunities to participants and their families.

The conference will be held at the beautiful Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort and Spa on Kona, which is in close proximity to a cadre of beautiful sites that summon the adventurous spirit. A Call for Papers is advertised in this issue of the *DDD Express* and on the DDD Web site. We will continue to provide you with more information as planning proceeds.

DDD Awards and Convention Proposal Reminders

During challenging and changing times in education, our awards process is a crucial means to acknowledge and honour the many exemplary, dedicated professionals in the field of developmental disabilities and ASD. Nominations for the John W. Kidd Subdivision Award, the Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award, and the Legislative Award may be submitted on an annual basis by January 15. Subdivisions may submit nominations

for Teacher of the Year and Paraeducator of the Year at any time. On behalf of the Awards Committee and the DDD Board of Directors, may I extend sincere appreciation to every individual and Subdivision who submitted an awards nomination this year. We look forward to a wonderful celebration of excellence at our Awards Presentation during the Annual Convention in Salt Lake City!

DDD also recognizes exemplary practice and research through the Practitioner Presentation Award and the Herbert J. Prehm Student Presentation Award. Practitioners providing direct service to individuals with developmental disabilities and full-time students are encouraged to submit proposals to share practitioner or student-oriented research and practitioner or student-oriented programs/projects at the Annual Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, April 18-21, 2007!



Cindy Perras, DDD Secretary, and Barbara Gartin, DDD Past President, at work at a DDD Board Meeting

Cindy Perras
Awards Committee Co-Chair
2410 Deer Run Avenue
Oakville, ON
L6J 6K9
905.890.1010 x2140
cindy.perras@cogeco.ca

Visit the official Web site of the Division on Developmental Disabilities at <http://www.dddcec.org/>



Call for Papers

The Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Developmental Disabilities (CEC-DDD) is hosting its 10th International Conference on Cognitive Disabilities/Mental Retardation, Autism, & Other Developmental Disabilities:

Research to Practice

January 31 – February 2, 2007
Kona, Hawaii

The 10th International Conference is both research-based and practitioner-focused; CEC-DDD welcomes the submission of innovative, creative proposals within the following strands:

- ◆ Assistive Technology
- ◆ Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- ◆ Cognitive Disability – Evidence-based Practices
- ◆ Multiple Disabilities
- ◆ Transition

Proposals should include the following information:

- ◆ Presenter name(s), affiliation, contact information (including e-mail)
- ◆ Session title, abstract (50 word maximum), and description including information as to how the proposal addresses diversity (300 word maximum)
- ◆ Session format – poster session or lecture

Proposals may be submitted electronically to Cindy Perras, Program Chair
cindy.perras@cogeco.ca or by fax to 905.844.4806.

Deadline: July 1, 2006

For additional conference information, please contact:
Tom Smith – tecsmith@uark.edu



Students' Corner

Kara Hume,
Student Governor

Fixing Kyle

I recently completed the coursework required in my graduate program and had the opportunity to reflect on my experiences as a student. I was reminded how much I have learned from those I was hired to teach—including workshop participants, trainees, family members, and especially individuals on the autism spectrum. I was reminded of Kyle, the first person with autism I had the privilege of working with, and the lessons my student taught me.

Working with Kyle, and knowing him and loving him, as well as his family, changed my life inside and out. Before I met Kyle when I was 16, I was certain I wanted to be a special education teacher; however, I had never met a person with autism. And I never realized that “fixing” a person with a disability shouldn’t be the ultimate goal of a special educator. Kyle was not going to be “fixed,” and in the meantime, there was a lot for me to learn. I had to learn to appreciate Kyle—autism and all. Not only appreciate it, but know his autism, love his autism, and ultimately accept his autism. This was the goal of a special educator—to connect with and understand students, then, from a loving place, to coax and motivate them to succeed. Kyle taught me that.

Though the methodology we used with Kyle came and went, the bottom line of unconditional love, no matter how

the autism interfered with our plans, prevailed. And that philosophy, taught by Kyle, has changed my life. I went on to become a special education teacher, but I felt different than many of my peers. I felt excited and energized by my students and their autism. I came to embrace it and use it to help my students grow and learn. I honored it as a part of them. This did not mean that I didn’t push my students to stretch themselves—I certainly did. But my pushing came from a different place: not to change who they were and remediate all of their deficits, but to accommodate them and focus on their strengths. Kyle taught me that.

This attitude was required by Kyle when working with him. Progress was slow, and at the beginning the connections were few and far between. It would have been easy to leave each day frustrated and annoyed and thinking of autism as the enemy. Focusing on the “fix” factor would have left me feeling empty or even incompetent perhaps. However, with an attitude of acceptance and the ability to view the world through the eyes of a person with autism, I was able to celebrate in his success, however small. I realized that it must have been very challenging for him to reach out and communicate with me, so every time he said “eeee,” I celebrated with him while providing his snack. I began to understand how difficult it must have been to connect socially, so when he hugged me or caught my eye, I validated that and respected him for his efforts. In response, he developed into a kind and gentle soul with a trusting spirit.

This spirit has stayed with him as he has continued to be challenged—riding horses, bowling, going to Sea World, beginning to shave—because he knows he is surrounded by acceptance, patience, and understanding. He isn’t “fixed,” but he sure is stretched. I, however, am fixed. Instead of becoming a teacher and professional who is overwhelmed with the difficulties my students and I face each year, I am able to recognize the small successful steps and victories. Kyle motivated me to devote my professional life to the field of autism—not in an attempt to fix people with autism but in an attempt to better understand people with autism and pass that understanding on to others. Beyond autism and special education, I am fixed in other ways because of Kyle. He has inspired me to be more patient and kind in my relationships (though it’s often difficult and I sometimes fail), as well as accepting of people and who they are. He encouraged me to take the perspective of other people so I might understand them and their points of view more clearly. He slowed me down. Kyle taught me that.

I would love to hear your stories of how you have been “fixed” by the children or adults with developmental disabilities whom you have worked with, played with, and loved. Please feel free to e-mail me (kahume@indiana.edu) with questions, thoughts, or ideas. Looking forward to connecting with you in Salt Lake City.



Kara Hume, Student Governor, at the
DDD Midyear Board of Director’s Meeting

News from the Diversity Committee

Rosa Lockwood, Chairperson, Diversity Committee

The Division on Developmental Disabilities (DDD) Board decided that the Division needed to recognize the importance of addressing diversity issues from the following perspectives: (1) how the diversity of families impact potential responses to the educational system and the educational system's response to that diversity; (2) the views that diverse families may hold about mental retardation and other developmental disabilities; (3) the necessity to meet the needs of the changing and growing diversity within the membership itself; and (4) the responsibility of the Division to assist its membership in meeting the needs of diverse students and their families.

The Division on Developmental Disabilities (DDD) Board of Directors voted the **Diversity Committee** change from ad hoc to **Standing Committee** status in April 2005.

(“Teachers’ Corner” continued from p. 1)

All of these “low tech” techniques facilitate the learning of critical social skills. In recent years, technology or “high tech” devices have allowed for the development of computer-based, interactive training methods. Such techniques are highly effective because they are designed to facilitate learning while providing opportunities to pause and discuss information and to replay scenarios for greater recall and understanding. Specific “high tech” exercises include

- Use voice-recording systems to help the child identify topic maintenance, intonation, and perseveration.
- Watch television and videos, such as age-appropriate sitcoms or child-friendly soap operas, that feature dramatic emotions and social scenarios.
- Practice vivo or video modeling by having the child watch live players re-enact a social situation or by taping the child and his peers in a social situation.
- Use computer programs that depict social scenarios and ask the child to determine what should be said or done next.

Available social training software includes the CD-ROM series from Social Skill Builder, which teaches children and adolescents the “rules” of social communication. Social Skill Builder’s CD-ROMs—*The Birthday Party*, *My School Day*, *My Community*, and *School Rules*—use interactive video sequences to imitate real-life social scenarios where children commonly interact with peers. A 2004 Virginia Public Schools study of the Social Skill Builder software’s effectiveness indicated that the programs dramatically increased ASD children’s socialization, daily living skills, adaptive behavior, and communication.

During this past year, the Diversity Committee has engaged in extensive research, collaborative writing, and electronic dialogue as members sought to define diversity in terms of what “it is” or what “it means.” This work has led to an internal discussion document that includes recommendations that address diversity from a global perspective. It will be submitted to the DDD Board of Directors to begin a dialogue on the topic with the intent of expanding discussions to the larger membership.

Given the importance of diversity as “our everyday reality” and the increasing need to address diversity issues, the Diversity Committee seeks to provide the membership a forum for discussion of the broader concepts of diversity. Opportunities to problem solve issues identified through these forum discussions will, it is hoped, lead to membership participation in the process of evolving not only a DDD position on diversity issues but also strategies for working with diverse populations.

Although social skills training can be implemented in many formats, interactive software programs allow children with ASD to practice everything from appropriate social touch and speech volume to appropriate classroom behavior and lunchtime interaction in a safe, nonthreatening environment. They provide a forum to help children carry learned skills into everyday interactions, and ultimately, be happy, fulfilled, and successful in all aspects of their lives.

Laurie Jacobs, MA, CCC-SLP, is the owner of Community Speech Language Services, an independent speech pathology practice that treats pediatric and adolescent language disorders, including autism, Asperger syndrome, and Down syndrome. She is also the co-founder of Social Skill Builder, a company that provides appropriate tools for teaching social skills to children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and other language/learning difficulties.



Barbara Gartin (left) and Jennifer Miller (right) present Laurie Jacobs with the DDD Practitioner Award

Executive Director's Corner

Tom E. C. Smith, *Executive Director*

Let's get ready for Salt Lake City! The annual CEC conference is an ideal time to get more involved in DDD activities. We need you to step forward and volunteer to serve on committees, find out about running for DDD offices, and get your subdivision up and running. For those of you with subdivisions, please remember to communicate with me regarding your financial rebate, incentive money for membership activities, or participation by DDD board members at your division-level meetings. If you want to start a subdivision, please let me know. We can assist in getting your paperwork together, get you some funding for start-up activities, and maybe have one of our DDD board members attend an organizational meeting. We're here to help, please contact us.

Constitution amendment to be voted on in Salt Lake City

As a result of postal regulation changes, we will be voting on a dues increase for student DDD members at our business meeting in Salt Lake City. In order to continue to be eligible for nonprofit status, our student dues must be at least half of our professional member dues; currently they are less than half. Therefore, an amendment will be presented at the business meeting to increase student dues to come into compliance with these new regulations. Please know that this is not an initiative taken by the Board; it is a requirement to continue to be tax exempt.



Membership and Unit Development Committee News

Jim Forristal, *Co-Chairperson*

You're Invited. As we approach the Annual CEC Convention and Expo in Salt Lake City, the Membership Committee, consisting of the regional representatives, would like to invite you to participate in our Membership Committee meeting to be held Friday, April 7, 2006, beginning at 9 a.m. (location to be announced). This will be an opportunity for you to share your questions, ideas, and concerns regarding DDD membership. The focus of our meeting will be to discuss some ideas with you about retention and recruitment of members to the Division. We need to have your ideas on ways we could better serve you as a Division and what specifically the Membership Committee can do to assist you. We are a diverse group of individuals who are in this organization to "focus on individuals with

cognitive disabilities/mental retardation, autism, and related disabilities." Together we can build a stronger Division.

If you can't make the Membership Committee meeting, please stop by the DDD booth located in the Convention Center. Here you can share your ideas, ask questions, or discuss your concerns with the Division Board Members. We would like the opportunity to meet you and look forward to seeing you in Salt Lake City.



Editor's Note . . .

Darlene Perner



On behalf of DDD, I would like to thank **Laurie Jacobs** for her featured presentation at CEC and her contribution to this issue's *Teachers' Corner*. Also thanks to **Kara Hume** for her article, "Fixing Kyle." Don't forget the *Call for Papers!* For more information about DDD, please go to our Web site (www.dddcec.org). If you have any questions, please contact me at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, Department of Exceptionality Programs, 400 E. 2nd St., Bloomsburg, PA 17815 or by e-mail (dperner@bloomu.edu). Please notify CEC if you have a change of address.

Search the Entire Archives

of *Education and Training in Mental Retardation/ Developmental Disabilities* at www.dddcec.org/search.htm