Working with Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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### Identified Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder

**ADDM Network 2000 – 2012**  
**Combining Data from All Sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveillance Year</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Number of ADDM Sites Reporting</th>
<th>Prevalence per 1,000 Children (Range)</th>
<th>This is about 1 in X children...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.7 (4.5 – 9.9)</td>
<td>1 in 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.6 (3.3 – 10.6)</td>
<td>1 in 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.0 (4.6 – 9.8)</td>
<td>1 in 125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.0 (4.2 – 12.1)</td>
<td>1 in 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.3 (4.8 – 21.2)</td>
<td>1 in 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.7 (5.7 – 21.9)</td>
<td>1 in 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.6 (8.2 – 24.6)</td>
<td>1 in 68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why the increase?

- Expanded definition of Autism
- Increases in effective therapies
- IDEA- Early Intervention
- Active Screening
- Increased awareness
What are Autism Spectrum Disorders

A group of conditions with similar symptoms and a wide variation in the type and severity of symptoms experienced.

ASD is characterized by difficulty with communication and interaction with others and repetitive or restrictive patterns of thoughts and behavior.
Co-morbid conditions

First Look: Data on Adults on the Autism Spectrum, 2009

http://www.iancommunity.org/cs/ian_research_reports/adults_on_the_autism_spectrum
Disability Services Office

- Extended time on exams
- Distraction-reduced testing environment
- Note-taking assistance or ability to record lectures
- Textbooks in alternative format
- Single housing accommodation, reduced course load, priority registration
Spectrum Support Program

- 1:1 SSP Coaching
- Small group seminars
- Case Management
- Staff/Faculty Training and Consultation
- Social Events
- Career Transition Support
- Referrals to campus resources
- Pre-Orientation Program
Strengths of Student on the Spectrum

- Average to superior intellect
- Passionate commitment to ideas
- Strong pursuit of knowledge within areas of interest
- Exceptional talents
- Creative, out of box thinking
- Strong sense of equality and justice
- Good visual/spatial learners
- Excellent rote memory
Challenges for Students on the Spectrum

- Executive Functioning
- Communication
- Social Skills
- Relationships
- Campus Life
- Independent Living
- Physical Challenges
What we might notice

- Oddities in vocal pitch, volume, intonation
- Delays in responding
- May appear distracted or use calming or focusing strategies such as pacing
- Misunderstand nonverbal/social cues
- Tendency to monopolize conversation or tangential
- Trouble assessing priorities and performance
- Heavy reliance of routine, structure
- Experience sensory overload
- Tendency to become overwhelmed, difficulty with emotional regulation
- Trouble getting started, staying focused, perfectionism
- Difficulty with vague instructions
- Difficulty asking for clarification or assistance
- Poor fine or gross motor function (poor hand writing, unusual gait)
Issue

Fails to hand in assignments

Barriers

• Difficulty with vague instructions
• Struggles with abstract concepts
• Difficulty with planning
• Difficulty with time and space management
• Refuses to submit inferior or incomplete work
• Lacks self advocacy skills

Strategies

• Utilize and review syllabus
• Clearly define requirements
• List all important dates clearly and in writing
• Notify student of changes to syllabus ASAP
• Explain the purpose of assignments
• Assist student in breaking down the assignment
• Utilize “early alerts”
• Refer
Issues

Attempts to monopolize conversation or goes off on tangents

Comes across as argumentative/rude

Barriers

• Strong narrow interests or knowledge
• Inability to read social cues

• Inability to understand rules of social interaction
• Concrete thinking patterns
• Atypical tone
• Failure to suppress internal thoughts
• Rigid/Inflexible

Strategies

• Set clear boundaries
• Provide direct feedback

• Provide direct feedback—avoid long explanations and reasoning
• Set clear boundaries
Building an Inclusive Structure for Classroom Discussions

• Set rules that encourage even participation
• Indicate when off-topic and refocus students on the big picture
• Encourage good citizenship
• Assist students in being thoughtful in expressing opinions (rephrasing)
• Encourage limitation on sarcasm, metaphors, double meaning
• Provide time to process before requesting a response
Issue

Difficulty with Group work

Barriers

- Difficulty connecting with peers
- Rigid/Inflexible
- Difficulty seeing others point of view
- Doesn’t understand unwritten rules of behavior
- Difficulties with non-verbal language
- Do not understand humor or sarcasm
- Executive functioning deficits
- Advocating for group role
- Oddities in voice pitch, intonation, odd gait, delayed responses

Strategies

- Consider assigning group members
- Consider assigning group roles
- Clarify expectations- academic and behavioral
- Monitor group interactions and mediate as necessary
- Support student and group
- Consider offering an alternative approach
Relationship Building on the Spectrum

- Identify interests
- Alternative communication
- Be concrete
- Be specific
- Redirect
- Holistic Approach
Strategies: What Can we do?

- Reach out to student to discuss concerns
- Get support from advisor (SSP) -- Use early alerts
- Refer to resources (Counseling, ASC, DSO, etc.)
- Provide direct feedback
- Assist with planning, prioritizing
- Supplement oral instructions with written
- Set clear rules, boundaries and expectations
- Give time and space to process
- Offer clarification, understanding and support
Q & A

Spectrum Support Program
www.rit.edu/ssp