

Tool Kit



AUTISM SPEAKS®
It's time to listen.

Puzzle Piece Project and Autism Awareness Month



Table of Contents

Puzzle Piece Project Introduction	Page 1
About Autism & Autism Awareness Month	Page 2
School-Wide Autism Awareness Activities	Page 3
K-1 st Grade Lesson Plan	Page 4
2 nd -3 rd Grade Lesson Plan	Page 6
4 th -5 th Grade Lesson Plan	Page 8
6 th -9 th Grade Lesson Plan	Page 10
10 th -12 th Grade Lesson Plan	Page 12
Materials Index	Page 14
Internet Resources Guide	Page 24
Book List	Page 25
Book Discussion Guide	Page 27
FAQs – Sample Questions	Page 29
Thank You	Page 30

Legal Disclaimer: Autism Speaks maintains the Puzzle Piece Project and Autism Awareness Month Tool Kit as a guide for teachers to use when creating Light It Up Blue and Autism Awareness lessons. The information and resources listed in this tool kit are not intended as a recommendation, referral, or endorsement of any resource or as an endorsement of credentials, qualifications, or abilities of any organization, product or professional. **For more Tool Kits visit autismspeaks.org.**



Puzzle Piece Project and Autism Awareness Month

Thank you for participating in our school-wide Puzzle Piece Project. Enclosed are differentiated lesson plans for grade levels K-12. In addition, you will find a list of resources to share with your class or for personal use.

Your tool kit includes the following materials:

- 1) **Grade Level Lesson Plan**
- 2) **Internet Resource Guide and Book List**
- 3) **Materials Index**
- 4) **Puzzle Piece Template**

Each class should create enough pieces for one per student and they should all connect to other pieces in your class. In order for this to be a school-wide project, all classes will share the puzzle with at least one other class. Please see the template provided in the Materials Index or go to: timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates. Teachers are advised to number each puzzle piece, students can design the side that does not have the number on it. Numbering the puzzle pieces is the easiest way to reassemble.

- 5) **Discussion Guide** for specific high school reading suggestions
- 6) **Request Form** for follow up lessons/activities from your Special Education Team (see Materials Index)
- (7) **FAQs** Samples of questions asked by kids



Please maintain an ongoing list of class questions/concerns/comments that come up throughout the month or during this specific lesson. You can use a KWL chart, a Parking Lot (see Materials Index) or any other ideas you have to document information. Encourage your students to ask questions, tell stories and express any concerns they have about autism, differences, disabilities, etc. Write these questions down and ask your special education teachers or the students themselves to respond. Please share any of your highlights (stories, photos, etc.) as a result of this project with your local Autism Speaks office.

About Autism

Autism is a general term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders – autism spectrum disorders – caused by a combination of genes and environmental influences. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by communication difficulties, social and behavioral challenges, as well as repetitive behaviors. While every country's statistics differ, it is estimated that one in 68 children in the U.S. is on the autism spectrum – a 123% increase in eight years that is only partly explained by improved diagnosis.

***There is currently no medical detection or cure for autism.
To learn more please visit AutismSpeaks.org.***



About Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks Autism Speaks is the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization. It is dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Since its inception, Autism Speaks has committed nearly \$200 million to research and developing innovative resources for families. Each year Walk Now for Autism Speaks events are held in more than 100 cities across North America.

What Is World Autism Awareness Day and Light It Up Blue?

On December 18, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 62/139, tabled by the State of Qatar, which declares **April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day** (WAAD) in perpetuity. This UN resolution declares WAAD as one of only four official health-specific United Nations Days and will bring the world's attention to autism, a pervasive disorder that affects tens of millions. The World Autism Awareness Day resolution encourages all Member States to take measures to raise awareness about autism throughout society and to encourage early diagnosis and early intervention. It further expresses deep concern at the prevalence and high rate of autism in children in all regions of the world and the consequent developmental challenges.



School-wide Activities

Shine a Light on Autism

Join with the international autism community in commemoration of April Autism Awareness Month. Kick-start your activities on April 2nd with Light It Up Blue, a unique global initiative to honor and celebrate Autism Awareness Day. Here are a few suggestions on ways you can participate in a school-wide effort to increase awareness and show your community that you care.

Wear Blue on April 2:

Ask your entire school to wear Blue on World Autism Awareness Day.

Sensory Input Exhibit:

Set up a sensory exhibit if you have access to sensory materials, ie: tunnels, weighted vests, body sock, squeeze machine, swing, scooter, deep pressure, brushes, etc.

Technology Lab:

Set up a tech lab and include available school AAC devices, iPads for ASL apps/communication apps and low tech pages. Have kids explore conversations with toys and games with the devices and books. Experience the difference between low and high tech. When they don't have voice output, they will need a partner to say things out loud for them or read what they are saying. When they use AAC, it will take longer to make a message, so they will need their partners to be patient, etc.

(Note: If your school does not have access to these items, check with local OT/PT therapy centers or family support centers for resource assistance)

Film Festival:

Set up a series of YouTube videos in the library, play "Autism the Musical" during lunch periods or choose a full length film about autism. *(See Internet Resource Guide)*

Recess Resources:

Gather a group of students at recess to explore ways to make recess games more inclusive. Create materials to illustrate new ideas.

Sign Language Club:

Create a lunch group to explore ASL (American Sign Language). Students can learn and practice signs.

Elementary K - 1st

Introductory Activity:

This lesson focuses on “Differences.” Use the following books and videos to help children explore their own unique attributes, as well as differences other people might have.

Hang up a “Differences Chart” in a place that the children can reach. Each child should have his or her own stickers. They can put their sticker under any category that describes them. (Encourage kids to make their own choices, instead of working with friends.)

Materials:

(see materials Index)

Differences Chart

Stickers

Resources:

Susan Laughs by *Jeanne Willis*

It's Okay To Be Different by *Todd Parr*

I Am Me (1:05)

[youtube.com/watch?v=KZsEr1fhgWY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZsEr1fhgWY)

Discussion Frame:

Review the chart together and lead a short discussion about the things each of them has in common with the other kids in the class. Also point out the things that are unique about each of them. Encourage a “partner share” with the person next to them about what they think is unique about themselves.

Elementary K - 1st

Puzzle Piece Project:

Create a puzzle using the template or website link in the Materials Index. Ensure there is one puzzle piece for each student and number the back for easy reassembling.

Have the students draw something they like, their favorite color or food. The fact that every puzzle piece is different furthers the lesson theme.

Materials:

Puzzle Pieces (see *Materials Index* or timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates/)

Art Supplies

Discussion Frame:

Explain how each puzzle piece is different, but they all come together to make something beautiful. Just like each student is unique, but together make a wonderful class and a fantastic school. Every puzzle piece (and student) has something special to add that no other piece has.

If you want to take this conversation further, you can talk about how some things are hard for one person, but easy for another. In a puzzle, it is easy for a corner piece to fit a corner, but a middle piece could never do that job. Someone might be really good at naming all of the different kinds of dinosaurs or solving really hard math problems, but that same person might not know how to play kickball.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Differences Chart:

with **Some Monsters are Different**
by David Milgrim

Similarities:

What do we have in common?
Read **Susan Laughs** *by Jeanne Willis* or
My Friend Isabelle
by Eliza Woloson

Survey Activity:

Scavenger hunt "Find someone who..."

Elementary 2nd - 3rd

Introductory Activity:

This lesson focuses on “What is autism?” Use the following videos to begin a discussion about autism. Use the KWL chart or Parking Lot to write down questions.

Materials:

(see materials Index)

KWL Chart

“Parking Lot” for Questions

Resources:

My Autism and Me Video (14 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ)

Intro to Autism for Kids (7 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiy5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiy5c)

I am the Child (4 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=xK1AG7gXVIM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK1AG7gXVIM)

Differences Activity:

“Close your eyes and raise your hand if . . .” Call out different activities the students like/don’t like, things that are hard/easy for them, physical attributes, personality traits, things that make them mad/happy/sad, etc. Instruct them to close their eyes so they are not answering based on their peers’ answers. When they open their eyes, they can see how each of them is unique and what they have in common with the other people in their class.

Venn Diagram Activity:

Recommended for Grade 2

With a partner, have the students create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast their physical attributes, personality traits, likes and dislikes. Challenge them to find several things that they have in common, as well as ways that each of them is unique.

Recommended for Grade 3

Tell the students to choose a book from the enclosed Book List. Read the book and identify the main character. Instruct them to create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast their physical attributes, personality traits, likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, etc. with those of the main character in the book. Challenge them to find several things that they have in common, as well as ways they are unique.

Materials:

(see materials Index)

Venn Diagram

Book List *(for grade 3 activity)*

Elementary 2nd - 3rd

Puzzle Piece Project:

Create a puzzle using the template or website link in the Materials Index. Ensure there is one puzzle piece for each student and number the backs for easy reassembling.

Encourage the students to draw something that represents their own unique qualities or anyway you choose to illustrate differences.

Materials:

Puzzle Pieces (see *Materials Index* or timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates)

Art Supplies

Discussion Frame:

Explain about how each puzzle piece is different, but they all come together to make something beautiful. Just like each student is unique, but together make a wonderful class and a fantastic school. Every puzzle piece (and student) has something special to add that no other piece has.

If you want to take this conversation further, you can talk about how some things are hard for one person, but easy for another. In a puzzle, it is easy for a corner piece to fit a corner, but a middle piece could never do that job. Someone might be really good at naming all of the different kinds of dinosaurs or solving really hard math problems, but that same person might not know how to play kickball.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Different/Same Game:

with hand-raising or taking steps forward

Partner Drawing:

Learn about nonverbal communication by working silently to make a collaborative art piece with a partner. Halfway through, teach three signs (draw, more and stop), then discuss how it helps to know a few ways to communicate. What worked? What didn't? How did it feel to not be able to talk to each other?

Sensory Stations:

- Headphones
- Weighted vests
- Itchy clothes
- Smelly things
- Light show

Elementary 4th - 5th

Introductory Activity:

This lesson will use the following videos to begin a discussion on “What is autism?” Use the KWL chart to write down questions/comments.

Materials:

(see materials Index)

KWL Chart

Resources:

My Autism and Me Video (14 minutes)

youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ

Intro to Autism for Kids (7 minutes)

youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiY5c

I am the Child (4 minutes)

youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pXCGo3Ns

Poetry Study Activity:

Have the students write poems about themselves focused on their unique qualities and things that make them special. Read their poems and discuss them in your group. Which one is your favorite? Why?

Resources:

Poems listed in Internet Resources Guide

Elementary 4th - 5th

Puzzle Piece Project:

Instruct students to design a puzzle piece to match their poem or select a poem from the suggested list. The poems can be written on or attached to the puzzle pieces.

Discussion Frame:

Explain how each puzzle piece is different, but they all come together to make something beautiful. Just like each student is unique, but together make a wonderful class and a fantastic school. Every puzzle piece (and student) has something special to add that no other piece has.

If you want to take this conversation further, you can talk about how some things are hard for one person, but easy for another. In a puzzle, it is easy for a corner piece to fit a corner, but a middle piece could never do that job. Someone might be really good at naming all of the different kinds of dinosaurs or solving really hard math problems, but that same person might not know how to play kickball.

Materials:

Puzzle Pieces

(see *Materials Index* or timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates)

Art Supplies

Resources:

Autism Poetry

karensscrapsandgraphics.com/poetry/poetry.htm

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Sensory Overload Spelling Test:

Create sensory overload (lights, blinds, fan, perfume, smelly food, classroom noises, itchy clothes, etc.), then give a spelling test and see if students can focus.

Student Presentations:

Have the students give presentations about themselves or a sibling/friend with autism.

Reading Activity:

Read the **Autism Acceptance Book** by *Ellen Sabin*

Middle School 6th - 9th

Introductory Activity:

Use the following videos to begin a discussion on “What is autism?” Use the KWL chart to write down questions/comments.

Materials:

(see materials Index)

KWL Chart

“Autism Basics” Autism Speaks School Community Tool Kit

Resources:

Intro to Autism for Kids (7 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiY5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiY5c)

I am the Child (4 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pXCGo3Ns](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pXCGo3Ns)

Autism Speaks School Community Tool Kit

www.autismspeaks.org/school

My Autism and Me Activity:

Watch the “My Autism and Me” videos.

Read the “My Autism and Me” poems.

Read the “Sibling Stories”.

Complete the activities about the perspective of the narrator.

Materials:

(see materials Index)

Video Clips

Perspective Worksheet

Poem Selections

Sibling Story Selections

Resources:

My Autism and Me Video (14 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ)

I am the Child (4 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pXCGo3Ns](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pXCGo3Ns)

Internet Resource Guide

Book List

My _____ and Me:

Recommended 8th Grade Essay

Ask students to choose something unique about themselves. Have them write a short paragraph or essay about how this trait affects their daily life, academics, social skills, etc.

Middle School 6th - 9th

Puzzle Piece Project:

Have each student design a puzzle piece that symbolizes how they are unique.

Materials:

Puzzle Pieces (see *Materials Index* or timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates)

Art Supplies

Discussion Frame:

Explain how each piece is different, but they all come together to make something beautiful. Just like each student is unique, but we all come together to make a wonderful class and a fantastic school. Every puzzle piece (and student) has something special to add, that no other piece has.

If you want to take this conversation further, you can talk about how some things are hard for one person, but easy for another. In a puzzle, it is easy for a corner piece to fit a corner, but a middle piece could never do that job. Someone might be really good at naming all of the state capitals or solving really hard math problems, but that same person might not know how to play soccer.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Sensory Overload Spelling Test:

Create sensory overload (lights, blinds, fan, perfume, smelly food, classroom noises, itchy clothes, etc.), then give a spelling test and see if students can focus.

Student Presentations:

Have the students give presentations about themselves or a sibling/friend with autism.

Write a Social Story:

Using Google images or Boardmaker icons, build a social story about a certain topic or situation at your school.

High School 10th - 12th

Introductory Activity:

Ask students to research “What is autism?” by visiting recommended websites and completing the “Webpage Exploration” worksheet.

Extend the activity by assigning one website to each group and have them make a presentation about the views and definitions represented on their site.

Materials:

(see materials Index)

Internet Access

**Webpage Exploration
Worksheet**

Resources:

Internet Resource Guide

Book Report Activity:

Have students choose a book from the recommended book list and complete a book report.

Have groups choose different books from the list and engage in group discussion/questions about the book.

Materials:

(see materials Index)

Books

Discussion Questions

Resources:

Book List

Discussion Guide

High School 10th - 12th

Puzzle Piece Project:

Have students design a puzzle piece or pieces to represent themselves. They should be able to describe how and why it is representative.

Materials:

Puzzle Pieces (*see Materials Index or timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates*)

Art Supplies (be creative!)

Discussion Frame:

Explain how piece is different, but they all come together to make something beautiful. Just like each student is unique, but we all come together to make a wonderful class and a fantastic school. Every puzzle piece (and student) has something special to add, that no other piece has.

If you want to take this conversation further, you can talk about how some things are hard for one person, but easy for the next. In a puzzle, it is easy for a corner piece to fit a corner, but a middle piece could never do that job. Someone might be really good at naming all of the state capitals or solving really hard math problems, but that same person might not know how to play soccer.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Explore other

Differences/Disabilities:

Compare and contrast social media – search and compare blogs.

Study a Famous

Person with

Autism

Search for the

Diagnostic

Criteria- DSM-V:

Description

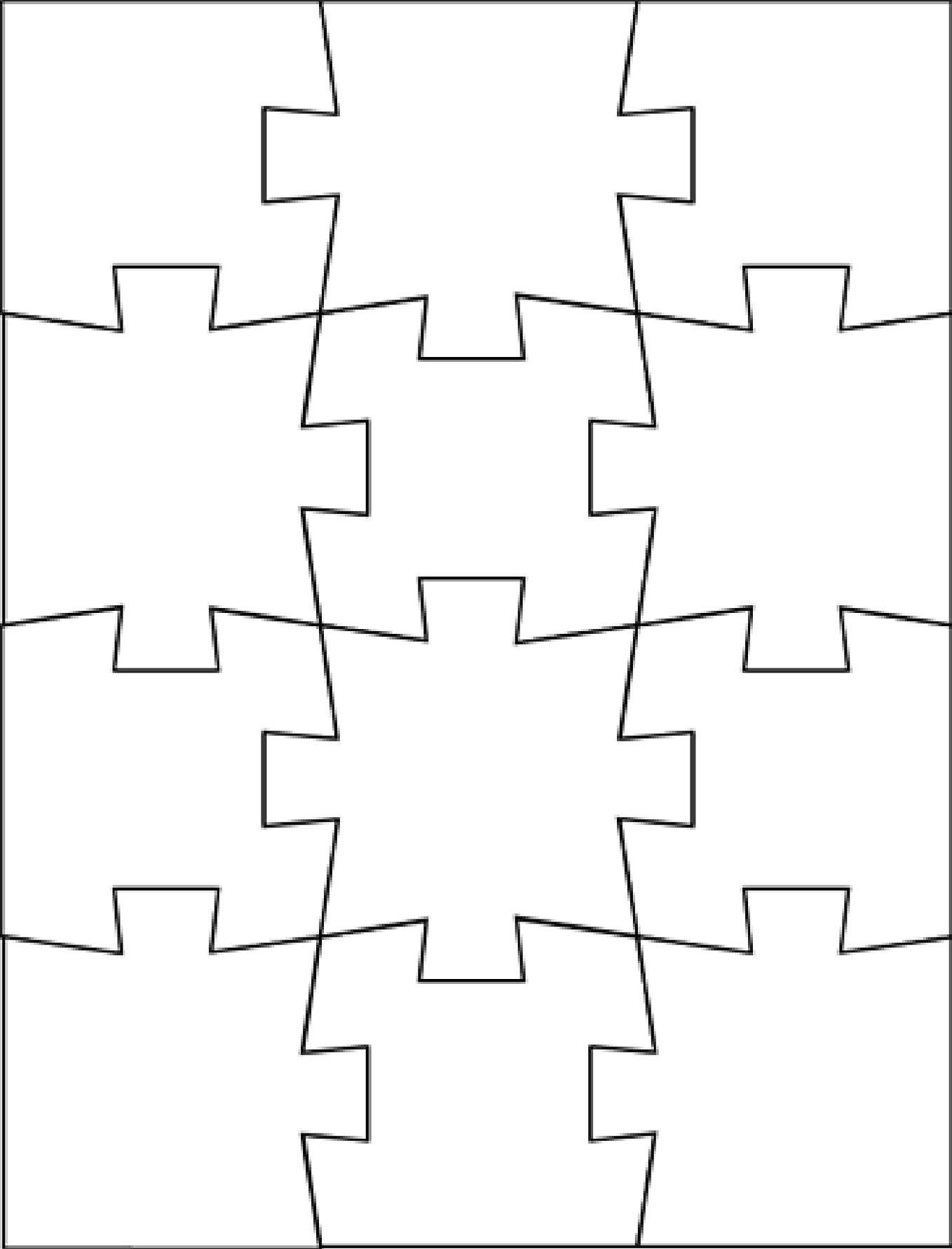
Have a Fundraiser

or Volunteer

How can you make a difference?

Materials Index

Puzzle Template



KWL Chart

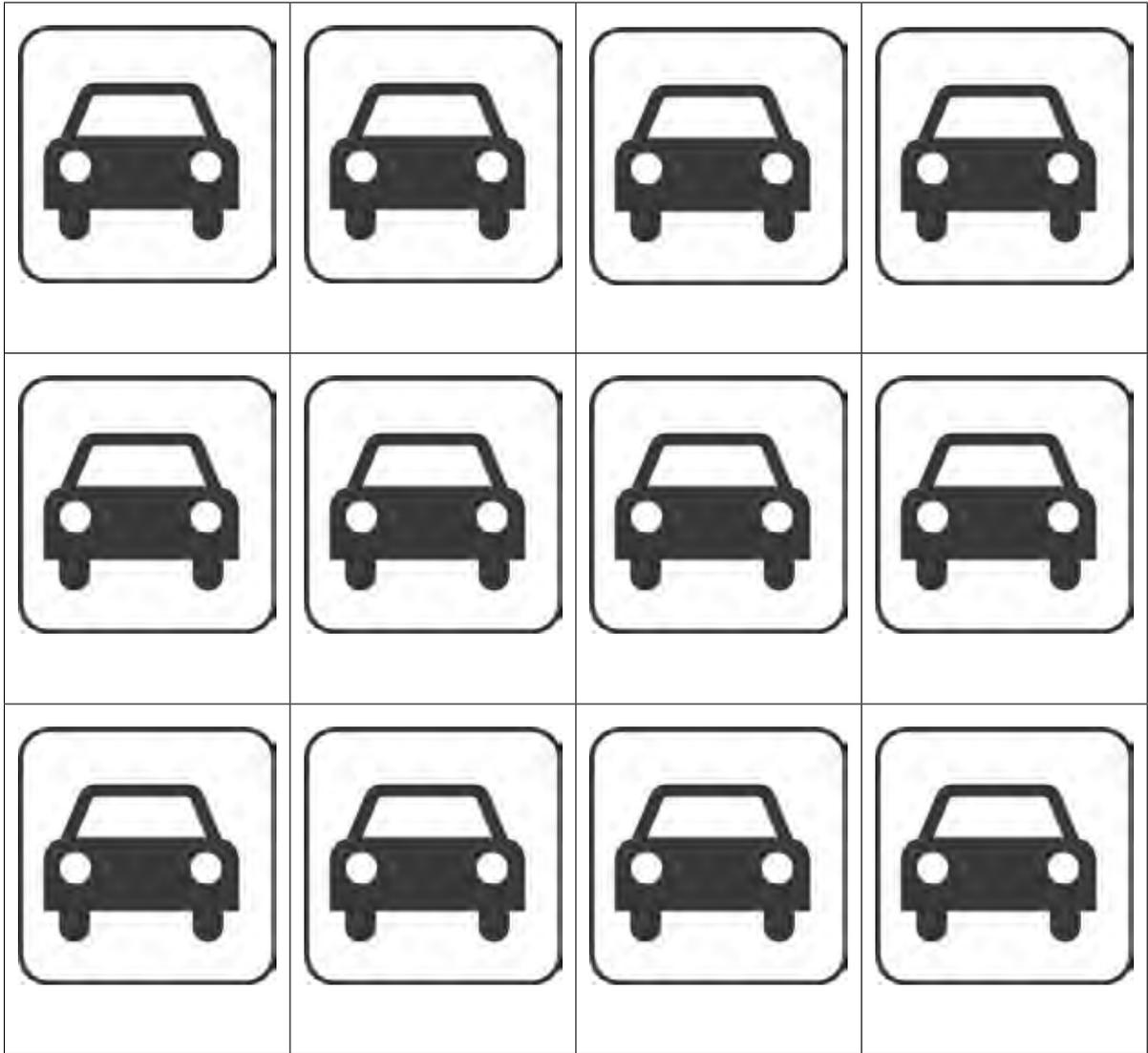
Know	Want to Know	Learned

Parking Lot Cars:

This works best as a poster, so make a copy and expand the size if you can so that the whole class can see the parking lot throughout the day. Copy and cut out these cars and instruct students to write their question or comment on the back of the car and tape it in the lot. The group can discuss the questions at a later time. This allows the teacher a chance to research the answer or check with a special educator for more information if they don't immediately know how to respond to the topic.



If you have a question or comment to share with the group, write it on a car and park it here in the parking lot for later.



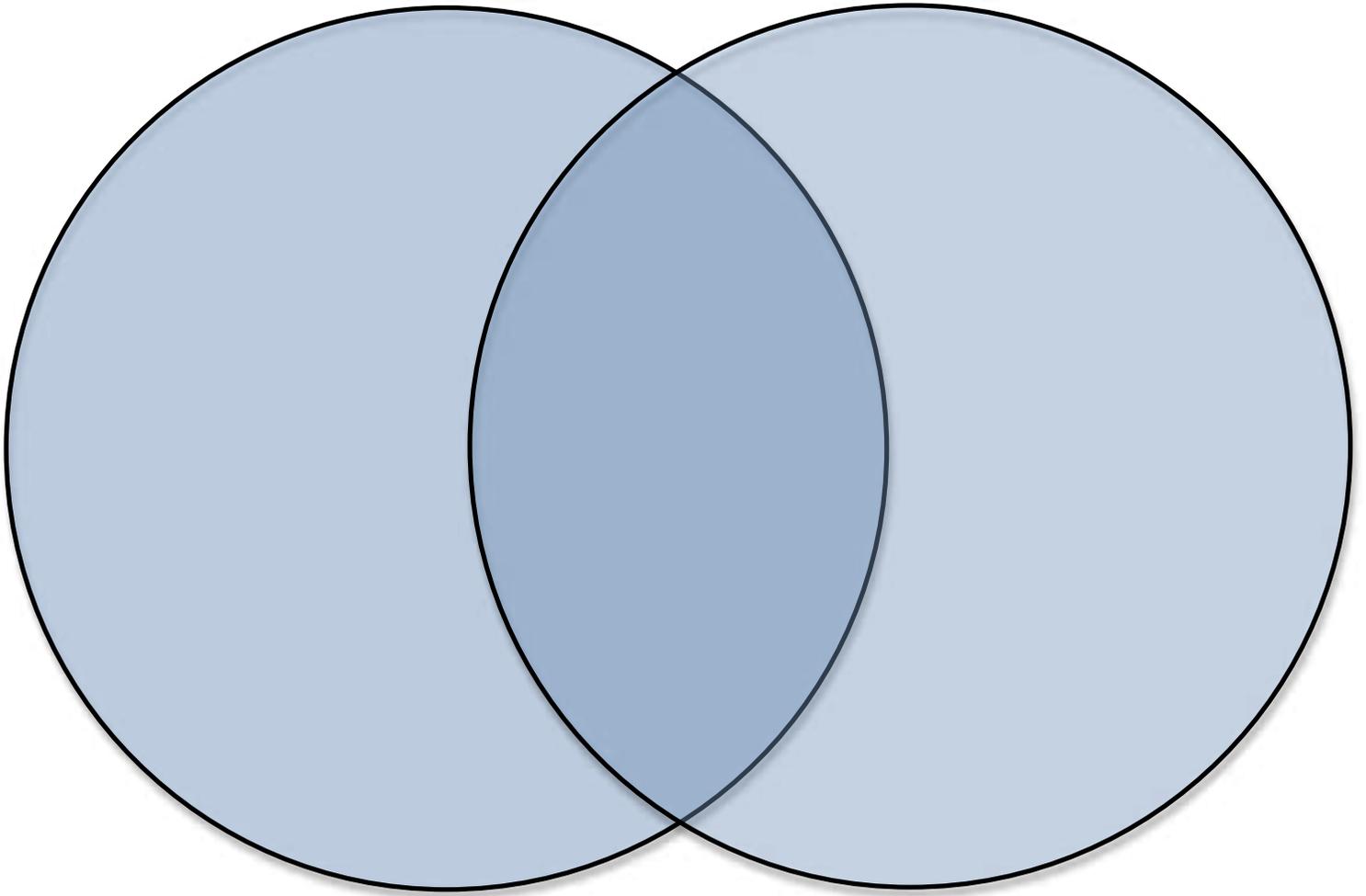
Samples of Visual to Use on the Differences Chart

Cut out these images and attach above a section on your Differences Chart. Have students write their name or place a sticker in the section if the picture represents them in some way. Label the sections in a way that is appropriate for your class (ex; "I am good at reading" or "Reading is hard for me").

Create your own images and categories for things that are relevant to your classroom and school community.



Venn Diagram



Perspective Taking Worksheet

Book/Poem Title: _____

Author: _____

Who is the narrator? Describe the narrator's personality and relationship to the story.

What is the narrator's relationship to the character with autism?

How might the story be different from a different character's perspective?

exploration worksheet

Request Form

If you or your students have questions/comments/concerns about Autism or other learning differences, please return this slip to the special education teacher or specialist who is assigned to your school or district.

Questions:

Comments:

Concerns:

My class would benefit from an ability awareness lesson on the following topic(s):

1.

2.

Internet Resources

INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES

Light It Up Blue

www.lightitupblue.org

Autism Speaks

www.autismspeaks.org

Autism Speaks School Community Tool Kit

www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/school-community-tool-kit

National Autism Association

www.nationalautismassociation.org

National Autism Awareness Month Information

www.autism-society.org/about-us/national-autism-awareness-month

POEMS

I Am Me! A Poem for Preschoolers:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZsEr1fhgWY

Autism Poetry

www.karensscrapsandgraphics.com/poetry/poetry.htm

I am Ethan

www.child-autism-parent-cafe.com/i-am-Ethan.html

First...Then

<http://www.parkerautismfoundation.org/the-misunderstood-child.html>

BLOGS

Autism Speaks Blogs

www.autismspeaks.org/blogs See some amazing stories of accomplishment by autistic children and their families. Read about 8-year old Sophie's marathon walk to help other children regain their smile or take a look at the incredible artwork by Jeremy, a young autistic adult who writes about being an autistic artist.

Lost and Tired: Confessions of an Autism Dad

www.lostandtired.com

Teen Autism: Awareness Leads to Understanding

<http://teenautism.com>

VIDEO CLIPS

"I Am the Child"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pxCGo3Ns

"Intro to Autism for Kids"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiY5c

"My Autism and Me"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ

"What Autism Feels Like"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=M20DIK1Yt3A

"The Brain of An Autistic Child" (recommended high school)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2o6KYlw2yww

MATERIALS

Puzzle Templates *courtesy of Tim Van De Vall*

timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates/



K - 1st

Susan Laughs

by Jeanne Willis

Susan is a girl in a wheelchair, though we don't see that until the last page. The book goes through all the things that Susan can do. She laughs, sings, paints, etc.

It's Okay To Be Different

by Todd Parr

Each page describes the different ways people and animals can be different from each other.

Some Monsters are Different

by David Milgrim

The story uses monsters to describe several ways they can be unique. It offers an opportunity to discuss different communication, preferences, strengths, physical attributes, etc.

1st - 5th

The Autism Acceptance Book

(there is also a teachers' guide)

by Ellen Sobin

The Autism Acceptance Book teaches children about autism, further develops their understanding for the people around them and encourages them to embrace people's differences with respect, compassion and kindness.

In My Mind: The World through the Eyes of Autism

by Adonya Wong

From the perspective of a child with autism, this book describes how Adonya experiences things in her world.

Ian's Walk

by Laurie Lears and Albert Whitman

Written from the perspective of a sister.

Since We're Friends

by Celeste Shally

A book about two boys: one has autism, the other does not. The story of their friendship provides practical examples of how to make such a unique relationship work.

4th - 7th

Rules

by Cynthia Lord

Written from the perspective of David's 12-year-old sister. (Sibling Story)

Middle School

How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World

by Temple Grandin

Temple Grandin's story about her success in life and experience with autism.

What's Up With Nick?

From the Organization for Autism Research

A story about Nick, a new kid in school with autism. This accordion booklet includes sections "Meeting a Kid with Autism", "Hanging Out With Kids That Have Autism", "Things to Remember About Autism" and more!

How to Talk to an Autistic Kid

by Daniel Stefanski (a child with autism)

Kids with autism have a hard time communicating, which can be frustrating for them and for their peers. In this intimate yet practical book, author Daniel Stefanski, a 14-year-old boy with autism, helps readers understand why kids with autism act the way they do and offers specific suggestions on how to get along with them. Written by a kid with autism for non-autistic kids, it provides personal stories, knowledgeable explanations and supportive advice—all in Daniel's unique and charming voice and accompanied by lively illustrations.

Middle/High School

The Reason I Jump

by Naoki Higashida

The inner voice of a 13-year-old boy with autism.

Al Capone Does My Shirts

by Gennifer Choldenko

From the perspective of the brother of a girl with autism. Set in 1935. (Sibling Story)

Book List

High School

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

by Mark Haddon

Narrated from the perspective of a 15-year-old with autism.

Mockingbird

by Kathryn Erskine

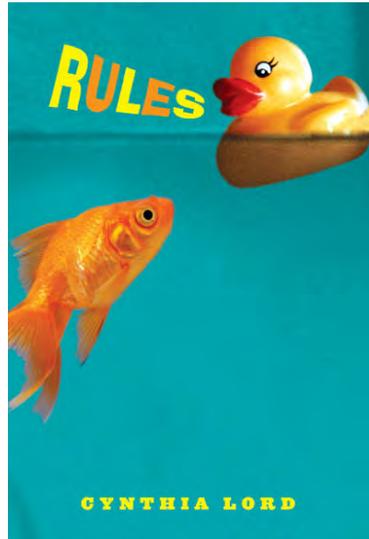
Narrated from the perspective of a girl with autism after her brother has died.

Cowboy & Wills

by Monica Holloway

The story of how a boy with autism, his family and his pet dog get along.

Discussion Guide



RULES

Written by Cynthia Lord
Published by Scholastic Press
ISBN 0-439-44382-2

The Book *(text taken from the book jacket)*

Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life, which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She's spent years trying to teach her brother, David, the rules from "a peach is not a funny-looking apple" to "keep your pants on in public"—in order to head off David's embarrassing behaviors.

But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising, new, sort-of friend, and Kristi, the potential next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What *is* normal?

Filled with humor and warmth, Cynthia Lord's debut novel takes a candid and sensitive look at feeling different and finding acceptance—beyond the rules.

Themes: friendship, honesty, acceptance, and diversity.

*Published by Scholastic Press, an imprint of Scholastic, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012
Rubber duck detail (c) Gary Doak/Photonica. Goldfish detail (c) G.K. & Vikki Hart/Iconica*

Discussion Points

Pre-reading

What expectations do you have from the book cover?

When you hear the word “rules,” how do you feel and what comes to your mind?

Are rules necessary in some situations? What good purposes do they serve?
When can rules be a negative thing?

Name some rules in your own life. What rules do your parents have for you?
Are there rules in your classroom or library?

Do you have some rules for yourself?

If you could create a set of rules for your sibling, what would those rules be?
Some examples might be related to borrowing your things or how to act when
you have a friend visiting.

The beginning of the book—a story begins with a character and a problem.

A main character usually has an outer problem and an inner problem that creates
the conflict in the book. What does Catherine want that is outside herself?

What does she want within herself?

What has kept Catherine from achieving those “wants” before the book begins?

Describe Catherine’s relationship with David.

How does David stand in the way of what Catherine wants for herself? What has
she done to try to resolve that?

Do your siblings ever stand in the way of what *you* want? How? What have you
done to solve that?

How are Catherine’s rules good for David? How do her rules hold him back?
How do Catherine’s rules hold *her* back?

What are Catherine’s feelings about Jason when she first meets him?

If you were drawing word cards for Jason, what would you have drawn for
“gross?” “Awesome?” “Stinks a big one!!!”

Pick three words to describe Catherine. Choose three for David, Jason, Mom, and Dad.

The middle—in a story, conflict escalates.

What are Catherine's strengths? What are her weaknesses?

How do her weaknesses cause events to worsen in the story?

What contradictions exist in Catherine? In Jason? In Kristi?

Name at least three characters who exhibit prejudice in RULES. What do they say or do which shows that prejudice?

How do Catherine's feelings change toward Jason as the book continues? What causes that change?

What do you think would've happened if Catherine had been honest right away with Kristi and told her about Jason? Why wasn't Catherine honest? What do you think she was afraid of?

Catherine is not the only character in the story who is not always honest. How do the other characters avoid dealing with problems or act in ways that are not completely truthful?

Do you think it's true that "Leaving out isn't the same as lying?" If not, is it ever true?

Some of Catherine's rules are what we might call "unwritten rules," comments on how people behave, such as "Sometimes people don't answer because they didn't hear you. Other times it's because they don't *want* to hear you." How do people learn these rules? Why do we have them?

When Kristi has David dance in Catherine's room, is she being mean? Since *he* wasn't upset by it, should Catherine have stopped the music?

The ending—a story leads to a climax and a resolution.

What choices does Catherine make near the end of the book that show growth on her part?

What does Catherine risk in inviting Jason to the dance? Do you think that risk was worth it? Why or why not?

What does Catherine give up at the dance? What does she give up in the final chapter with David?

Look back at the three words you chose to describe the characters near the beginning of the book. Do those words still fit? What adjectives might you add for each character now?

If Catherine were to write a rule at the very end of the book, what do you think it would be?

What do you think might happen next for Catherine with Kristi? What choices does Catherine have?

Have you ever had a conflict with a new friend? How did you resolve it?

Have you ever had to choose between two friends? What did you do?

Imagery

Can you list the ways water is important in the story?

Name the different modes of communication in the book.

How does art figure into this story? Music? Books? How do those create a connection between the characters?

Name the ways wishing and magic play a part in the story.

Booklist

Novels to compare and contrast:

Al Capone Does My Shirts by Gennifer Choldenko. 2004. Putnam Juvenile.

Set on Alcatraz Island in 1935, this poignant novel is told from the viewpoint of Moose, a boy both frustrated by and fiercely committed to his sister with autism. A Newbery Honor Book, 2005.

A Corner of the Universe by Ann Martin. 2002. Scholastic Press.

Twelve-year-old Hattie develops a sensitive friendship with her Uncle Adam, a man challenged by schizophrenia and autism, during the remarkable summer he comes to live at her family's boarding house. A Newbery Honor Book, 2003.

Tru Confessions by Janet Tashjian. 1997. Henry Holt and Company (BYR).

Told through diary entries, twelve-year old Tru creates a film documentary highlighting the life of her developmentally delayed twin brother.

Me and Rupert Goody by Barbara O'Connor. 1999. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Set in the Smoky Mountains, eleven-year-old Jennalee's world is turned upside down when a man with developmental delays arrives in town, claiming to be the son of the grocer Jennalee looks up to as her best friend.

The Summer of the Swans by Betsy Byars. 1970. Viking Juvenile

Fourteen-year-old Sara Godfrey and her developmentally delayed brother Charlie love to watch the swans on a local lake, until Charlie disappears one day and Sarah must reach past herself to find him. Winner of the Newbery Award, 1971.

Nonfiction:

Views From Our Shoes: Growing Up With A Brother or Sister with Special Needs by Donald J. Meyer. 1977. Woodbine House.

This book is a collection of honest, small essays written by siblings of children with a broad range of special needs.

Websites and Links

Author's website: <http://www.cynthialord.com>

Please visit my publisher <http://www.scholastic.com> for more ideas on using books in the classroom.

Helpful links about disabilities:

The Autism Society of America: <http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer>

For parents of disabled children:

http://www.parentlink.act.gov.au/parentguides/parentg_disabilitybrothersister.htm

Lesson Plans For Teachers:

"Understanding disability" by Gill Chesney-Green

http://www.schoolzone.co.uk/resources/articles/GoodPractice/classroom/Special_needs/Understanding_disability.asp

Understanding Kids Who Are Different: Activities for Teaching About Disabilities
http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson115.shtml

Lesson plans from The Disability Rights Commission: <http://www.drc-gb.org/citizenship/lessonplans/talkvideo/index.asp>

Guinea Pig Web-quest created by Maggie Johnson, Santa Ana Unified School District
<http://can-do.com/uci/lessons98/Guinea-pig.html>

Just for fun:

Guinea Pig Fun <http://guineapigfun.com/>

Rubber Duck Tic-Tac-Toe: <http://www.getodd.com/duck/fun2/f2b.html>

About the author

Cynthia Lord has been writing since high school. A mother of two children, one of whom has autism, she says, "I wrote RULES to explore some of my own questions about living with someone who sees the world so differently than I do, but also to show a full experience of family life with a child with autism: the happy moments, the heartbreaking ones, the ones that make me laugh."

She lives with her husband, children, and a Bichon Frise in an old house in coastal Maine. A former teacher, behavioral specialist, and bookseller, she now enjoys writing for children.



Additional information about RULES and Cynthia Lord can be found at the author's website: www.cynthialord.com.

Discussion Guide

Rules

by Cynthia Lord

Written from the perspective of David's 12-year-old sister.

Mockingbird

by Kathryn Erskine

Narrated from the perspective of a girl with autism after her brother has died.

Discussion Questions

(Adapted from the "Discussion Guide")

1. People on the autism spectrum often exhibit ritualistic behaviors. What are some of Caitlin's ritual behaviors? How do these actions seem to make her feel? Can you think of some behaviors you might do as a ritual or habit?
2. Based on instructions on how to act, Caitlin reminds herself to "look at the person." Why do you think this is particularly difficult for her?
3. What are the reasons Caitlin dislikes recess?
4. When Josh and Caitlin have an altercation on the playground, their classmates come to Caitlin's defense, but later some of these same students laugh and tease Caitlin. Why would they choose to behave differently in each situation? What can we learn from their contradictory behavior?
5. Though she is a gifted artist, Caitlin is afraid of using color in her work. She also doesn't include people in her work. Why might these things make her uncomfortable? How is this related to her disability?

Cowboy & Wills

by Monica Holloway

The story of how a boy with autism, his family and his pet dog get along.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Wills' diagnosis of autism affect his parents? How is the experience different for each of his parents?
2. Wills has many talents that are extraordinary and exceptional. What are some of these talents?
3. Wills also has many challenges that are related to his autism. What are some of these challenges?
4. Wills often feels extremely afraid and nervous about trying new things or being in a new situation. Can you describe a situation you have experienced that made you feel afraid in the beginning, but turned out to be rewarding in the end?
5. There are several children in the story who reach out to Wills. How do these acts of kindness affect his progress? Can you think of any times you have felt supported by your peers?
6. Describe Wills' relationship to his dog, Cowboy. How does Wills change after Cowboy comes into his life? Can you think of other situations where a pet can help someone with a disability?

Frequently Asked Questions

From Kids and For Kids

How do people get autism? Is it contagious?

Autism is not contagious. The brains of people who have autism just work a little differently. Their brain looks a lot like mine and yours, but there are differences in the way the messages are sent from the body to the brain and from the brain to the rest of the body. You cannot get autism from someone else.

Why do they talk differently? or Why don't they talk?

All people communicate in different ways. Some people like to use their hands to gesture or their face to make a lot of expressions while they talk. Some people prefer to write or text message because talking on the phone or in person is hard for them. Some people speak quietly and others speak loudly. It can sometimes be difficult for people with autism to communicate with spoken words or facial expressions. They learn how to communicate in other ways. Sometimes they repeat what other people say; sometimes they use sign language, pictures, writing or communication devices to talk. Some people with autism can talk a lot and communicate pretty well. Every person with autism is different.

Why won't they play with me? Why do students with autism have a hard time playing?

For some, learning to “play” does not come easy. It's not only that the students may not understand the rules of the game, but they also may not know how to do things that others find easy. They do not automatically know how to ask to play, approach a friend and say hi or take turns. Sometimes people with autism like to play in very specific ways and it may be hard to learn new ways to play. Having patience and giving them time to respond are good ways to help your friends play. Also, be a detective and look for ways your friends are already playing and try to join in.

Why do they flap their hands/spin/show other “different” behaviors?

Have you ever tried to do that? Sometimes, they do those things because it feels pretty cool for them! A lot of people with autism experience things with their senses in a different way than you and I experience them. Sometimes they are doing those things simply because they like to do it. Sometimes it might be a way for them to show you they feel excited, nervous or even mad. Every person with autism is different and the reasons they do certain things are very different, too. We all have our own way of doing things and that's what makes each of us special!

Thank You

Authorial Credit

Janelle Franco, MA, has helped children with Autism for almost 10 years. She began her career as a paraprofessional, supporting students in an inclusive setting and went on to become a Board Certified Associate Behavior Analyst in 2008. At that time, Franco worked as a behaviorist in homes and as a senior instructor at a private school for children with severe autism. She received an Education Specialist credential in Moderate/Severe Disabilities and a Masters in Special Education from San Francisco State University. Franco has been teaching in the Bay area public school setting for 5 years. Her classroom is specially designed to support students in grades kindergarten through second grade who are moderate to severely impaired with Autism. Franco utilizes a variety of teaching techniques, social support systems, and behavioral strategies to create a very inclusive and successful learning environment for all students. Beginning in the summer of 2014, Franco will work as an independent Autism Specialist to support people with Autism and their families as they learn to participate and make meaningful contributions in their own relationships and in the larger community.

You can reach Ms. Franco at janellefranco@gmail.com