



N E B R A S K A
autism spectrum disorders
 N E T W O R K

The Southeast ASD Scoop

April 2011
 Volume 2, Issue 7

Are They a Level 1 Friend or a Level 6 Friend?

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Friendship is an area that often times students with an autism spectrum disorder struggle with. At the NE State ASD Conference, I was fortunate enough to sit in on one of Michelle Garcia Winner's breakout sessions. She was speaking about friendship issues for individuals that struggle with social thinking. As she was presenting, Michelle discussed how her clients with ASD struggled with understanding how friendships can differ.

We see this lack of understanding in the school as well as the home environment. Often times, our elementary students with ASD will think that everyone in their class is their best friend. A student in high school may think that a specific student is their best friend because they played together at recess back in the 4th grade, even though they may not have talked to each other since then.

To help address this lack of understanding, Michelle Garcia Winner and her colleague, Pamela Crooke, created a Levels of Friendship Pyramid to help teach the complexities of friendship. She has written about these levels in her book, *Socially Curious and Curiously Social*.

After reading through the chapter explaining these levels, I think that these levels of friendship can be modified for upper elementary age students and used for students from middle school to adulthood. If you work with upper elementary age students, you may have to change the vocabulary and add visuals to explain each level.

The Levels of Friendship are:

◆ Level 1: Friendly/Greetings

Interactions with peers at this level are composed of saying "Hi" to each other in the hallway, on

the playground or out in the community. Typically, these individuals are peers that you don't know well, don't talk to or do things with.

◆ Level 2: Acquaintance

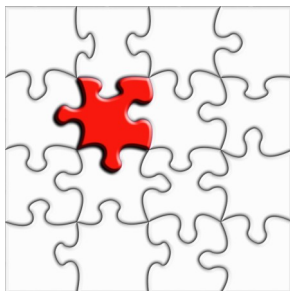
These peers are typically classmates. You may have had small discussions with them during school. You may also be friends with them on Facebook or other social media.

◆ Level 3: Possible Friendship

At this level, you are starting to get to know someone better by meeting together to do something in the same environment where you were introduced to them. For example, at this level, one student may ask the other student to have lunch together or meet them during recess time. This would take place during school hours

◆ Level 4: Evolving Friendships

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Thank you to everyone that attended the 8th Annual State ASD Conference.

It was a huge success, with over 750 educators and parents in attendance.

Here are some suggestions on how to use all of the new information you learned at the conference!

Thank You!

- Share small tidbits of information weekly with staff members over email.
- Type up notes from a specific session or topic and give to your administration or team members.
- Set up a time to meet with

your team to share the information.

- Pick one strategy or idea to implement with your students and/or team.

Make sure to mark your calendars for the 9th Annual State ASD Conference next April 12th and 13th, 2012 in Lincoln!

Are They a Level 1 Friend or a Level 6 Friend?

Continued from page 1

Level 4 friendships require more effort. At this level, students are planning to meet up outside of the environment where they originally met. For a student at school, this would mean making plans outside of the school day.

◆ Level 5: Bonded Friend

Friends at this level know each others likes and dislikes and are there for each other. Friends at this level make sure that their friend is doing okay and have regularly set times to meet outside of school.

◆ Level 6: Close Friends

At this level, your friends are those that you feel comfortable enough to share your feelings, worries and dreams. Most people only have one or two of these friends at one time.

Alongside the pyramid is also a category of On Again/Off Again friendships. These are individuals that come into your life at different points or environments. This is very common and it happens to everyone. Individuals change over time and so one friend that may be in your life during 4th grade, may not be in your life during 11th grade.

There are several strategies that can be used during each level to increase the level of friendship.

Some strategies are:

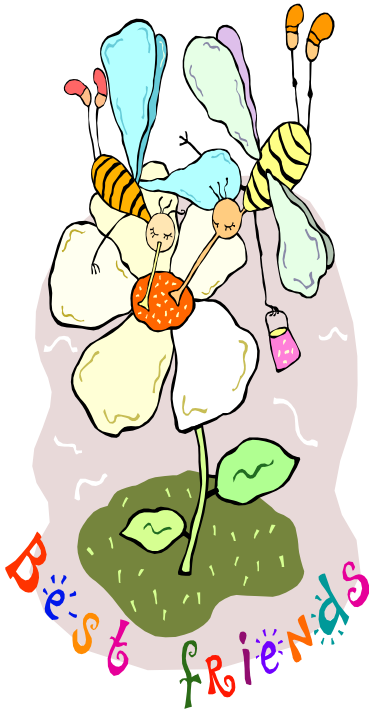
- * Level 1—Say “Hi” to many different people in your environment. Smiling at someone when passing by can serve as a greeting if they are looking at you.
- * Level 2—Sit near peers that you typically say “Hi” to or try to work together in a group project or during an activity at school. If someone starts talking to you, answer their questions/comments and show interest in them.
- * Level 3—Call or text the peer that was at level 2 and ask about homework or seek the person out to eat lunch with or play a game at recess. Social media is also a great way to connect during this level.
- * Level 4—Hang out with them during various school events and ask if they want to get together outside of school. Work with them during group projects and call them if you have questions on your

homework.

- * Level 5—Consistently hang out with the individual during school. Arrange times to talk or hang out outside of school. Begin to talk more about your feelings and other things happening in your life.
- * Level 6—Share your feelings and worries with them. Consistently check in with them to see how their day or week is going. Have planned times to meet outside of school. Listen to your friend when they express feelings or concerns.

Friendship for students on the autism spectrum can cause anxiety and be very difficult. Students on the spectrum may need to be shown where their current friendships are on the Level of Friendships Pyramid. As adults, we need to make sure that our students have the appropriate skills needed to make friends. The Level of Friendship Pyramid by Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke is a great resource for parents and teachers alike to use when teaching friendship skills!

Information taken from *Socially Curious and Curiously Social* by Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke.



Sensory Suggestions, Part 6

Sensory needs are very common in students on the autism spectrum. If sensory needs are not addressed, students are not able to regulate their bodies, thus increasing the likelihood of behaviors. The past five issues have highlighted the vestibular, proprioceptive, tactile, auditory and visual systems. Activities to address those systems were included. This month we are highlighting the gustatory, or taste, system. Please consult with your Occupational Therapist before implementing any sensory activities with your student.

Sensory System: Gustatory (taste)

Location of this system: Chemical receptors in the tongue, closely related to system of smell

Function: Provides information about different types of taste (sweet, sour, bitter, salty, spicy). Includes chewing, sucking, texture, temperature of food.

Activities for students experiencing challenges in the gustatory system:

- Try different spicy/sour tastes to help with alertness, e.g. sour candy, vinegar chips, pickles

- Some students find resistive sucking through a straw organizing, e.g., thick shakes, pudding, applesauce
- For students with a need for crunch or chewing to help organize, try raw veggies, tough licorice, chewing gum, gummy bears, hard apples

Please remember: Adjust food intake according to diet preferences and possible weight gain.

Suggestions taken from: “Practical Solutions for Stabilizing Students with Classic Autism to Be Reading to Learn: Getting to Go!” by Judy Endow, MSW. (2010) Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

Summer Training Opportunities

There are several training opportunities that are schedule for this summer.

For the flyers that contain specific information on the workshop and instructions on how to register, please go to:

http://www.esu6.org/services/asd_home.htm

or

<http://seasdnetwork.wordpress.com>

If you have any questions about the trainings, please call or email me!

Thanks!

Melissa Trautman

May

May 23rd - ESU 5, Beatrice

Strategies for Students with High Functioning Autism/Asperger Syndrome

May 24th - ESU 5, Beatrice

Introduction to Verbal Behavior and use of the VB-MAPP

June

June 2nd - ESU 6, Milford

Introduction to High Functioning Autism/Asperger Syndrome

June 3rd - ESU 3, Omaha

Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders

June 6th and 7th — ESU 6, Milford

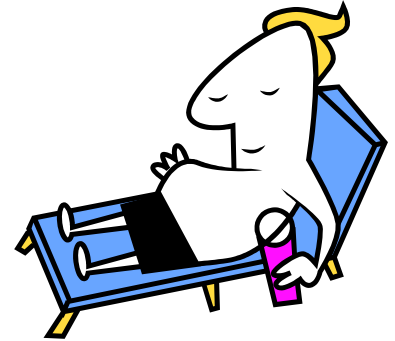
Structured Teaching Workshop—(Participants must attend both days)

June 8th - ESU 6, Milford

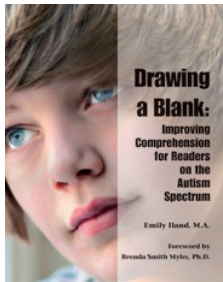
Planning for Social Skills Instruction

June 20th and 21th - ESU 3, Omaha

Introduction to Verbal Behavior (this is a 4 day workshop—the other two days will be scheduled in October)



Resources Available for Checkout from the ASD Library



Drawing a Blank: Improving Reading Comprehension for Readers on the Autism Spectrum

By *Emily Iland, M.A.*

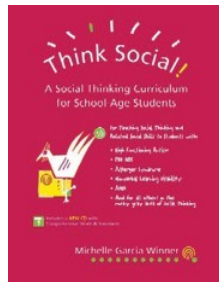
Foreword by *Brenda Smith Myles, Ph.D.*

Finally a book dealing with reading comprehension and students on the Autism Spectrum! Emily's book is full of great strategies to sue when teaching reading comprehension and information on the connection between

autism spectrum disorders and comprehension skills.

Published in 2011 by the Autism Asperger Publishing Company

(<http://www.aapcpublishing.net>)



Think Social! A Social Thinking Curriculum for School Age Students

By *Michelle Garcia Winner*

If you had the chance to hear Michelle Garcia Winner at the NE State ASD Conference on April 7th, this is the curriculum that Social Thinking is based upon. This book provides ideas and lessons on how to be a part of a group, increase self-awareness and become

social detectives. Suggested IEP goals are also included in this great resource!

Published in 2008 (2nd Ed.) by Think Social Publishing, Inc.

(www.socialthinking.com)

Website Resources

Here are some websites that are great resources when working with individuals on the spectrum!

⇒ The Behavior Doctor -

<http://www.behaviordocor.org>

Dr. Riffel's website that is FULL of printable resources, Power Points and data sheets.

⇒ Intervention Central: Behavior Resources -

<http://www.interventioncentral.org/index.php/behaviorial-resources>

This resource list is a great website for articles and suggestions on how to deal with behaviors and various strategies that can be tried with your students.



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Check Us Out on the Web !

<http://unl.edu/asdnetwork>

http://www.esu6.org/services/asd_home.htm

<http://seasdnetwork.wordpress.com>

Upcoming Trainings

The Ziggurat Model: Designing comprehensive behavior interventions for individuals of all ages with autism spectrum disorders

May 2nd and 3rd, 2011 ESU #3, Omaha, NE

8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

For more information, please go to <http://www.unl.edu/asdnetwork>

SPACE IS LIMITED! Registrations are due April 22, 2011

SAVE THE DATE!

Nebraska State ASD Conference

April 12th and 13th, 2012

The Cornhusker Hotel, Lincoln, NE

