

Connections

A Newsletter For Teachers Working With Autism
Educational Equity For All



October 2015

Ideas to Help Students in Sitting Still & Focusing

Chewies or gum work well to help students calm or refocus. **Fidgets**, are small toys a student can hold in their hand, and help students increase focus and attention. (Rotz, Wright, 2005) Good fidgets should have a combination of an interesting tactile composition, pliability, and some movement opportunities for the hands and fingers.

Seating Discs Children who have problems sitting tend to "under register" movement, and without that ability, they can't focus. Although they look strong in quick actions, the body can't endure long periods of sitting or standing. Sit discs are ideal for providing kids with movement and tactile stimulation while sitting in their seats. Literature indicates positive effects of dynamic seating for children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) for attention and classroom behaviors (Schilling & Swartz, 2004; Schilling, Washington, Billingsley, & Deitz, 2003). As a group, students with IEPs and those considered At-Risk demonstrated overall improvements and/or consistencies in rate, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension while seated on an air-filled cushion. Students with IEPs showed the greatest increase in reading rate and comprehension, with a full or almost full grade level of improvement noted.

Timers Timers help students understand the passage of time and can monitor their own activities. Better time awareness can help with focus and attention and also relieve stress and anxiety.

<http://www.nationalautismresources.com/susi.html>



Don't miss the next Sensory Friendly Film!



**Saturday, Oct 17, 2015 – PAN
10 a.m. local time**

In order to provide a more accepting and comfortable setting for this unique audience, the movie auditoriums will have their lights brought up and the sound turned down, families will be able to bring in their own gluten-free, casein-free snacks, and no previews or advertisements will be shown before the movie. Additionally, audience members are welcome to get up and dance, walk, shout or sing - in other words, AMC's "Silence is Golden®" policy will not be enforced unless the safety of the audience is questioned.

Tickets are \$4-6 depending on location and can be purchased on the day of the event.

To find a participating theater:

<https://www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films>

FEATURED IDEA OF THE MONTH



Affirmation Cards for Kids

Affirmation Cards for Kids is a card deck created for children with the intention of affirming, inspiring and teaching important lessons such as self-love, confidence, love of nature, inclusion, love of others, responsibility and other essential values for positive development.

<http://www.affirmationcardsforkids.com/>

TEACHING TIPS AND TRICKS

Strategies to Promote Successful Inclusion Experiences

The following suggestions may help teachers provide better learning experiences in an inclusive classroom:

- Use consistent classroom routines. For example, asking for help, frequent breaks, putting away homework, getting assignments, bathroom breaks). Consistent routines lower all students' anxiety and increase their ability to function independently in the classroom.
- Give visual instructions, rules and use [visual classroom schedules](#). Use their visual strengths along with visual reminders to increase their ability to function independently both academically and socially. Picture icons and social stories can encourage appropriate behavior and keep their attention to tasks. For example, when jokes are appropriate, free time activities allowed after completed tasks, and social stories about classroom rules. Picture icons like Boardmaker or Writing with Symbols help to increase student understanding. Use a picture or words system for independent work listing the procedures and tasks to be completed.
 - 1) Listen or read teacher directions,
 - 2) Work on page 6, problem 1-4,
 - 3) Put finished work in All Done folder,
 - 4) Read car magazine when all done.
- Watch for signs of high anxiety or difficulties a student may be having with sensory and emotional overload, and other signs of stress. Students experiencing stress may put their hands over ears, plugging their ears, squeezing a body part, or repetitive behaviors, like rocking. Show students to a pre-selected self-calm area, such as a chosen chair in a quiet area or a 'sensory area' (place within the room providing stress release activities or items, i.e. brushing, koosh balls and squeeze toys, weighted blankets, headphones, and music).

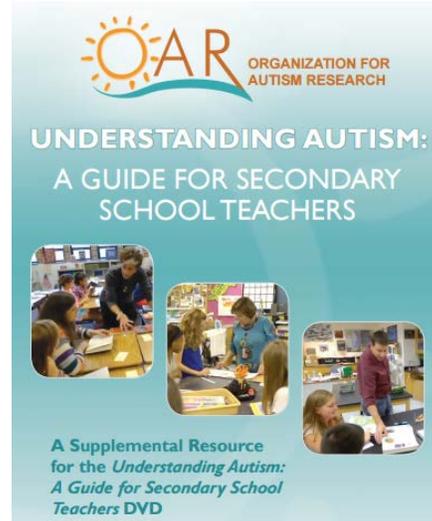
<http://www.child-autism-parent-cafe.com/autism-students-in-inclusive-classrooms.html>

WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

<http://www.wikihow.com/Teach-Autistic-Children>
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2014/06/05/teaching-children-with-autism-the-fine-art-of-self-advocacy/>
http://www.learninglinks.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/LLIS-03_Autism-Strategies.pdf



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

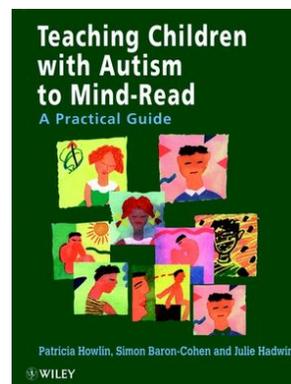


This PDF is the entire guide with hyperlinks to the videos that accompany each section. Great resource for a training on autism in the middle and high school environments.

<http://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/sites/csesa.fpg.unc.edu/files/UnderstandingAutismSecondaryTeachersGuide.pdf>



RECOMMENDED READING & VIDEO



Teaching Children with Autism to Mind-Read: A Practical Guide for Teachers and Parents

Patricia Howlin, Simon Baron-Cohen, Julie A. Hadwin

The difficulties experienced by children with autism and related conditions in inferring the thoughts, beliefs, desires

and intentions of others are well documented in numerous studies. It now seems that these deficits underlie many of the social and communication problems that are characteristic of autism. Teaching Children with Autism to Mind-Read explores the relationship of "theory of mind" deficits to other areas of children's functioning and describes existing experimental work that has attempted to enhance the skills associated with understanding others' minds.