

Please note:

In 1991, I learned of Joy Garand's (now Joy D. Nichols) successes with Social Stories in Cincinnati. We began sharing ideas. I encouraged Joy to describe her experiences in writing, which she graciously did in February of 1992. Her letter follows, with edits to protect confidentiality.

Please keep the date of each resource in mind as you explore the history of Social Stories and these original documents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Gray". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

February 22, 1992

Dear Carol,

Thank you very much for the manual that you sent me. I cannot begin to say enough about it except that it is fantastic. I sincerely hope you realize what a difference you have made in other peoples' lives. Your social stories continue to be a great success at Taylor and in the homes of my students. Just last week at a parent-teacher conference, we were discussing a behavior problem with one of the students in the integrated classrooms and possible solutions. The first words out of Mr. Walker (father of the student) were, "Why don't we just write a social story?" It was exciting to me that the parents also feel so strongly about the power that these stories have and the difference that they can make with their children.

At Taylor, we have used the stories with all settings throughout the school! We have used the stories in the special area classrooms, the regular classrooms, outside on the playground, in the cafeteria, and other special events at school. At home, the parents have been using the stories for many aspects pertaining to the home.

The first story we wrote was at the beginning of the school year right after a student's first art class. The student is a five-year-old child with autism, Ben. Ben is integrated into the first grade. Ben is expected to follow all the rules, as well as all the other students. Ben entered the Art room and was seated in his assigned seat, but he did not stay there for long. Ben was given the rules but did not appear to be listening or following them very well. Ben was making many strange noises, getting up and running around the room, and not following the cues given by the teacher. I went back that evening and wrote a story explaining to Ben what he was expected to do in Art class. Ben read the story for the next week. I would leave out pages and ask him what came next or what he was supposed to be doing in that segment, and he seemed to be doing very well. The following week we returned to Art class. Ben immediately found his seat and stayed in it the entire time. He followed the directions of the teacher and was picking up on small cues given by the Art teacher. When the teacher asked for something, Ben would comply without prompting. He

also gradually picked up on other cues as the year continued. When we left class that afternoon, the Art teacher came up to Ben and said, "Ben, I don't know what you did different but keep it up. You were great." After Art class, Ben could answer questions with either facilitated communication or rating himself by circling happy/sad/straight faces to communicate to me how he did in his class. Ben would read the story once a week for about a month, and now he goes back to the story only if there has been a problem. Ben did very well with picking up the social cues once we were able to discuss them in story form. He has even told me at times what cue he missed during the class and what the current response from him should have been. It is all very exciting to me as well as him. Ben has even brought back a sequence to the art teacher to show how he should have acted in the class.

Since this proved to be so successful for Art class, we continued to write social stories for the other two specials (music and gym). These both proved to be very successful to let Ben see how he was supposed to react to cues in the classroom and what was expected of him. We sometimes had pictures accompany the stories and other times they proved to be a distraction.

The next task was to have Ben start picking up cues when he was outside lining up in the morning to come into school and while he was outside at recess. He did well with these stories immediately. Then we wrote stories pertaining to social cues he needed to follow in the cafeteria and his homeroom. Both of these stories also showed much success and helped Ben to become much more independent. He occasionally would need some verbal cues, but he was becoming much more independent and quite successful at it. All of the Taylor staff including teachers, paraprofessionals, volunteers, custodians, and many others were impressed with the change in Ben and were always ready to tell him.

At home, Ben's parents were very excited about this new idea and wanted to try it out at home. So, we took Ben's fascination with harassing the cat and wrote a social story about it. We discussed the cat and how one should handle cats. I sent the story home after reading through it once at school. Ben's parents also read through the story with him at home that evening, and an incredible thing happened. The boy who once threw the cat across the room, pulled and carried the cat by its

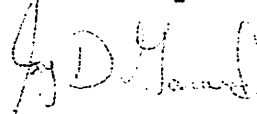
tail and hurt the cat was now very different in regards to the cat. The following morning when Ben was eating breakfast the kitten jumped up on the table and was drinking milk out of Ben's cereal bowl as he was trying to eat. Instead of flinging the cat or shoving it all Ben would do was to gently blow on the cat hoping it would go away. Ben's parents stood and watched in amazement. I received a note that morning explaining the power that this story had overnight with their son.

If I honestly had more time in the day, I would write social stories pertaining to many situations at home and school but unfortunately I need more time. We have been able to use the stories not only to pick up social cues in situations but also to work on sequencing, whole language, math, and many other disciplines. These stories have also proved to be successful with a young lady who has just turned seven years old and has autism. Her name is Marie. She uses the stories in a similar way that Ben utilizes his stories. I also have two young who use the idea of social stories but in a different way. Ethan is a seven-year-old young man who has cerebral palsy. It is difficult to understand him. The other student is David, a six-year-old young man who has cerebral palsy but is unable to speak. We are now using facilitated communication with all four of these students. The way that Ethan and David use the social stories is a bit different. We discuss social situations before they occur and what cues may happen and where or who they will be coming from. The students tell us how they think they should act, and we talk about how we think they should respond. We usually try to hit a happy medium. After the situation occurs we also then discuss what happened and how they reacted to the social cues. We compare the two and see if they acted in the way that we had agreed would be the correct way to react. It usually proves to be a very interesting conversation. David is a great little boy who is always anxious to please others, and he is quick to follow all cues. Ethan is also a very good boy but likes to have his opinion with certain situations. But the idea of putting situations in story form is an excellent idea especially for the primary age student. My students love to read and listen to stories, so it proves to be a very educational tool to have learning situations in a story form.

Overall, the stories have been nothing but absolute success and have instilled excitement and enthusiasm in all of us down here in Cincinnati. Thank you for your excellent talk in Indy this summer and all of your help throughout the year. I honestly hope you realize what an incredible difference you have made in the lives of others. It was a pleasure to hear you speak and honor to consult with you over the phone and through letters. Thank you again for your manual it is great. I hope that I have given you enough information along with the stories that are included. If you have any questions or would like something clarified, please don't hesitate to call or write. I also have more stories and situations, but I wasn't sure how many to send. Congratulations on your chapter of the book, I am sure everyone is very proud of you. Keep up the excellent work. You are an inspiration and light for the rest of us. Have a great one and don't forget to take care of yourself, too!

Take care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joy D. Garand".

Joy D. Garand

Teacher of children who are multi-challenged.