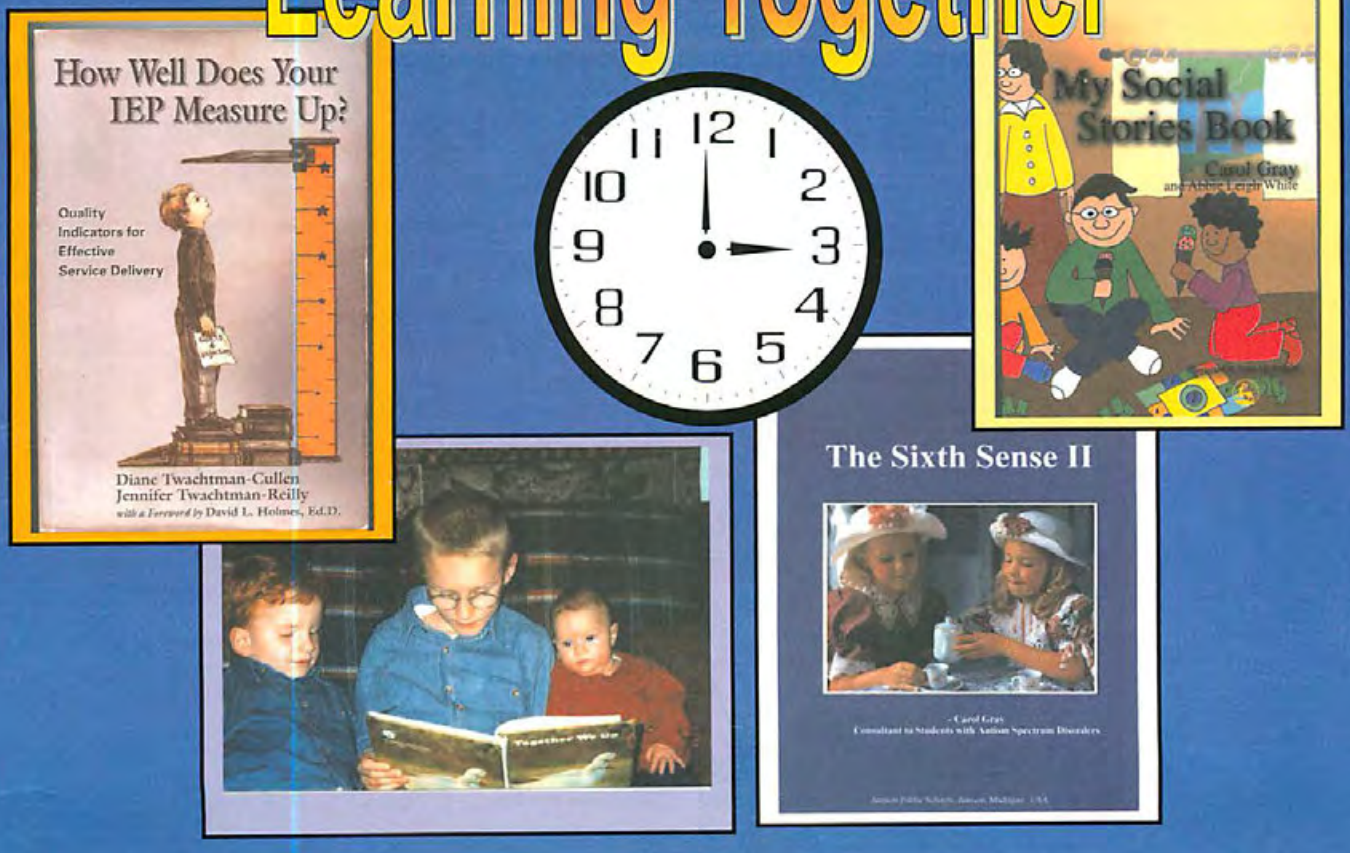
Jenison Public Schools Volume 14 No. 1-2

THE MORNING NEWS

Dedicated to people with autistic spectrum disorders and those who work alongside them to improve mutual understanding.

Learning Together



THE MORNING NEWS

Jenison Public Schools, Jenison, Michigan USA
Spring-Summer 2002 **Volume 14, No. 1-2**

Learning Together

Helping Children Understand Autism Spectrum Disorders

Combined Edition: Spring & Summer 2002

Special Rip-Out Resource: The Sixth Sense II by Carol Gray

About our cover: The last decade has witnessed a wealth of new ideas and resources to assist in teaching social understanding to children with autism spectrum disorders and their classmates. Highlighted in this special combined edition are a few of the newest resources. One of them, *The Sixth Sense II* is yours with our compliments. The photo at bottom left fit our theme of "learning together" perfectly: that's (left to right) Nathan, Benjamin, and Jenae Hoekman (see the article pp 2-6).

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Introduction to the Combined Spring-Summer 2002 Edition

- Carol Gray, Editor

As a newsletter published by a school system, *The Morning News* spring and summer issues consistently reflect the renewed pace and energy that the close of the school year brings. This combined edition breaks additional new ground: you are reading the largest Morning News to date.

The decision to combine the spring and summer issues came in response to subscriber requests. Last year The Morning News ran a three-issue series on bullying, *Gray's Guide to Bullying Part I, II, and III.* While the series was well-received, one frequent criticism was that three separate issues were cumbersome for future reference. Realizing the information on teaching children about autism spectrum disorders (ASD) would span two issues, we elected to combine the issues for subscriber convenience. We think it's a definite improvement; our only regret being that limited space prevented us from including all of the articles and ideas we received from subscribers.

Prerequisite to talking with peers about autism spectrum disorders, many parents first look for guidance to introduce their child to his/her diagnosis. Our first article by Laurel Hoekman describes how she and her husband, Ken, used children's literature to launch their discussion. The article shares their family's experience with the process.

Laurel's article is followed by an article by Michelle Woods with an accompanying story by Christine Whitmire. Michelle Woods is an Inclusion Facilitator at Bauerwood Elementary School. Michelle was new to Jenison Public Schools last September, as was Alex Whitmire, one of her students. Michelle used a few activities to help Alex's classmates understand some of his behaviors. She opened her lesson with a story by Alex's mother, Christine Whitmire.

Included in this combined edition are two reviews of new resources related to our theme. First a look at a new book by Dr. Diane Twachtman-Cullen and Jennifer Twachtman-Riley with a title that makes its purpose clear: *How Well Does Your IEP Measure Up?* The IEP is one document that addresses the needs of students with ASD to enable them to learn alongside their peers. This book includes the history of the IEP process, information regarding the the law, and templates for goals and objectives to address the core deficits in ASD. Second, Angela Telfer reviews a new book in press, *My Friend with Autism* by Bev Bishop, a *take-home* book for young classmates and their parents.

For nine years parents and professionals have been using *The Sixth Sense,* a lesson plan that explains the challenge of ASD to general education students. Years of experience resulted in revisions, additions, and new information. This issue introduces *The Sixth Sense II*, an improved and expanded version of the original. It is included as a complimentary rip-out section in this edition of The Morning News.

Each issue of The Morning News includes announcements of interest to subscribers. For example, this issue announces the release of a new Social Story book (p. 14). Also, we're pleased to highlight two future conferences: the second annual conference of The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding, and a workshop on Violence Prevention hosted by Jenison Public Schools. All in all, this edition of The Morning News continues our commitment to share practical information to support your efforts.

Welcome to the Spring-Summer 2002 special combined edition of The Morning News.

Introducing Asperger's Syndrome

- Laurel Hoekman, parent and
Director of Special Events, The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding

Recently, my husband and I told our sons, ages 5 and 7, that they have Asperger's Syndrome. It was the beginning of a new chapter in our lives, but thanks to early diagnosis, early intervention, our sons' positive self-esteem, and the love and assistance that we have all been surrounded by up to this point, it was neither a traumatic nor a life-changing revelation.

Our family began living with this diagnosis four years ago, when my oldest son Ben was three. My husband and I found our reality turned upside down when, after consulting with numerous professionals about Ben's differences, we were told that he had autism, or more specifically, Asperger's Syndrome. Two years later, our second son received the same diagnosis.

Ben and Nathan remained the cute, loving, happy, funny little guys that they always had been, while their father and I suddenly began spending hours researching Asperger's on the Internet, shuttling the boys to therapy and school, reading books, and talking to other parents and professionals. We had an all-consuming need to talk about it, to seek information, to explain our sons' interests and behaviors to others, and to receive validation for ourselves as parents. It seemed to be such a difficult road we were traveling.

Looking back, I realize that somewhere along the way the road became smoother, or perhaps, more familiar and comfortable. We no longer talk much about our boys' diagnosis, although we continue to research it because we find it fascinating, and because we are able to learn new ways to understand and help our children. We, and those around us, have come to see that Asperger's Syndrome is only one part of the special people that are our children. They are influenced by the experiences they have had, their own unique personalities and position (birth order) in our family, their friends, and other factors, as well as the symptoms that led to their diagnosis. We have taught Ben and Nathan that everyone has his or her own differences, and that those differences (both strengths and weaknesses), help to make each person special.

Our boys have always been aware of the differences in their lives that require special assistance. Together, we express thankfulness for the teachers, therapists, doctors, teaching methods, and interventions that are there to help us. We have talked openly with both boys about their need for speech, occupational, and physical therapy, explaining that their bodies don't always work the way they want them to. We have successfully used Social Stories to explain a variety of confusing or frightening things, as well as to celebrate our sons' accomplishments. Two years ago we implemented a gluten-free and casein-free diet. Ben and Nathan know, both from our explanations and from experience, that these proteins worsen their anxiety, difficulty with eye contact, and ability to focus their attention. Since we received our sons' diagnosis, I have been actively involved with Early On (a federal Part C program) and The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding (a non-profit organization dedicated to individuals with autism spectrum disorders). Through my work, I help other parents and professionals seeking information and support for children with autism or other delays or disabilities.

But although the diagnosis has been ever-present in our lives for the last several years, for Ben and Nathan, it had remained nameless until that recent night.

Naming it, we feared, would give our sons the impression that they were hopelessly different from their peers. Like branding a cow, a diagnosis would be a tangible reminder to them and to others that they were born different, that they perceive the world in a different way, that they act differently, and that they will always be different. But when we reached a crossroads where it was evident that they needed to know the diagnosis, I realized that we had been laying the groundwork throughout these past years. Because Ben and Nathan already knew that they were different, just as they knew and celebrated the fact that *everyone* is different from one another, being told their "label" would not likely be devastating to them.

There were indications that it was time to give the boys this additional piece of information. Having a new baby sister, (and being a very protective and loving big brother who wants the best for her) Nathan recently asked, "When will Jenae start therapy?" That question showed me that the diagnosis, although nameless, was an accepted, and even positive part of our family. Because of it, we have gone to fun playgroups and therapy sessions, joined a new school that we all love, met wonderful, supportive people, and created numerous memories.

A day later, I discovered that a couple of older school friends were familiar with the diagnosis, and were discussing it amongst themselves—thankfully in a very positive way. I knew that the time had come for our boys to be given the information that they might need from us, rather than from someone else.

Our family had just finished reading *The Trumpet of the Swan*, by E.B. White (1970), which follows the life of the fictional swan Louis. Most of the swans view Louis as "defective" because of his lack of a voice. What good is a trumpeter swan that can't trumpet? How will Louis woo a female if he can't croon to her? However, with the help of his friend Sam (a young boy who loves animals), Louis believes in himself and works hard to learn to read and write and to play a real trumpet. Along the way, he secures several interesting jobs to earn money to pay for the trumpet, and eventually wins his true love, the beautiful swan Serena. What a beautiful reminder that *different* does not equal *bad,* and that hard work and the help of friends can lead to success and the ability to overcome one's difficulties.

When we sat down to introduce Asperger's Syndrome, I reminded Ben and Nathan about Louis. I pointed out that although the story describes the life of only one voiceless swan, there were surely other swans that couldn't trumpet, even if the swans in his pond had never met one. I told them that there is a name (or "diagnosis") to describe someone who cannot talk—we say that he is "mute". Louis' mother had been the first to notice that he was different from the other swans. After she told her husband that she suspected Louis was unable to talk, his father "tested" him, trying unsuccessfully to get him to talk. We remembered that the other swans were not always kind to Louis, not because he was bad, but because he was different from them. Even after he learned to read and write (an exceptional accomplishment for a bird!) they did not accept him because they could not read what he had written! But we also discussed the incredible experiences that Louis had, and how well his life turned out as he ignored the occasional taunting and ridicule, and instead learned to work hard, to rely on the help of friends, and to celebrate his differences.

I then told Ben that years ago, his dad and I had noticed that he seemed different from other children. Some of his differences were very special; he was always smiling, he could navigate around town very proficiently, and he had an incredible memory. But some of his differences concerned us. He was unable to kick, throw, or catch a ball. He had difficulty looking at people's eyes, and he had unusual and intense interests, fears, preferences, and dislikes. So we took him to various professionals for testing, and finally heard that his particular differences had a name—Autism, or more specifically, Asperger's Syndrome. Two years later, Nathan, who is unique in both his ability to make people laugh and in his incredible language proficiency, but who also struggles with motor and sensory issues, received the same diagnosis.

We explained that this diagnosis is not like cancer or chicken pox. It will not make the boys sick, nor is it contagious. Instead, it describes some of the unique set of differences and abilities common to people with Asperger's. We also told them that there are different terms that can be used, including autism, high-functioning autism, PDD, and Asperger's. They each chose to refer to their diagnosis as Asperger's.

Ben's first question was, "Mom, is Asperger's a good thing?" I asked him what he thought, and he responded, "I think it is!" My husband and I assured him that we think it is, too. It is one part of what makes him special and unique. But I drew a comparison to my recent pregnancy, which produced a beautiful baby girl, but during the times of morning sickness, preterm labor, bed rest, and a difficult delivery, did not always seem like a good thing. Asperger's might not always feel like a good thing to Ben and Nathan (or to us, their parents), but it is to be celebrated because it is an integral part of who they are! It has also brought about unanticipated (but positive) friendships, lifestyle changes, and memories.

Ben's next question was, "Will Jenae have Asperger's?" We explained that it is possible that she will, since it tends to run in families. But whether she does or does not have the diagnosis, she will always be our precious "princess," and we will continue to love her and provide for her. If she needs special schooling, therapy, or diet (she is not receiving any gluten or casein at this time), we will make sure that she gets it.

We told the boys that there are other children in their school with the same diagnosis. However, when Ben suggested that he thinks one of his classmates has it because she always talks about gerbils, we reminded him that this is something that is diagnosed by a doctor, not a seven-year-old emerging Asperger's expert. We also reminded Ben and Nathan that they would always share similarities with others, even those without a diagnosis.

Ben's last question was, "Mom, could you come to school and explain Asperger's to all my friends?" I assured him that although I am more than willing to do that, we would likely wait for indications that his peers are ready for that information, just as we waited to present the information to him. I will continue to go into the classroom to discuss friendship and the uniqueness of everyone (as I did when Ben was in kindergarten) if the teachers would like that.

Our decision to introduce the diagnosis was affirmed when Ben said, "Thanks for explaining this!" I find that it is a relief to know that Ben and Nathan have this information. We no longer have to worry about someone else telling them about it, and the boys are free to ask questions. They also have the key to understanding themselves better. When Ben found out that our friends Brian and Carol Gray, his teachers and therapists, and all 600 participants at last year's Gray Center conference (which he watched me organize) are interested in Asperger's Syndrome, he said that he wants to go to our next conference to learn more! I told Ben that in addition to conferences, I learn about Asperger's through books, the Internet, and talking to other parents and professionals. But I learn the most through knowing him and Nathan, as they

constantly share insights on how their minds work, how they process sensory input, and how they perceive other people's words and actions. How fortunate I am to get on-site training every day!

Since we told the boys their diagnosis, they have asked some good questions, and have been eager to show their "Asperger books", for example, *What Does It Mean To Me?* (Faherty, 2000) to their grandparents. But otherwise they have taken the news in stride, showing that this information is simply another piece in the puzzle of their lives. Thanks to the preparation they have received, this piece fits perfectly.

The night of our discussion, as the boys walked off to bed, I overheard Nathan say, "Remember, Ben, everyone is different; no one is perfect!" I realize that I have to give my husband and myself (and all of the people in our support system) credit for having taught them this over the years. And I greatly admire Ben and Nathan for their ability to accept themselves and those around them as different, yet special. Together, we hope to spread this message to the world, that we may all come to accept and appreciate the uniqueness of each individual, with or without a diagnosis.

References
Faherty, C. (2002). What does it mean to me? Arlington, Texas: Future Horizons
White, E. B. (1970). The trumpet of the swan. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

Announcing...

The Complete Social Story Reference & Resource Guide

Frequently parents and professionals working on behalf of ... with autism spectrum disorders contact our office in hopes of securing a ... s. As the number of studies on the effectiveness of Social Stories ... increases, we would love to be able to respond to inquiries ...

PAST THE 'USE BY' DATE. Information and/or forms in this section are no longer accurate or usable. Please disregard.

If you know of ANY arti... ...y providing us with a complete reference. ...ve the information. We also welcome copies of th... ...e reference is still most appreciated. Your contributions will ...ilable within the coming year.

In addition, we would lik... ... commercially available children's literature that meet the defining criteria of a Soci... ...e very close!). There are a growing number of children's books that accurately describe so... ...tions from a first or third person perspective. Should you encounter any of these resources, regardless of the topic, please forward to us a complete reference.

Each person submitting information to us will receive a complimentary back issue of THE MORNING NEWS. Indicate your choice if one is preferred. Please enclose your name and address. *Thank you* in advance.

Introducing Children to Autism Spectrum Disorders

- Michelle Woods, Special Education Teacher, Jenison Public Schools

Increasingly students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are fully included in general education classrooms. To ensure social success for all students, a positive classroom environment where students feel accepted as a valued member of the class is essential. One way to foster a sense of classroom community is to provide students with information about ASD. This helps them to understand the reason for unique behaviors, and provides an opportunity to teach helpful responses. As an inclusion facilitator at Bauerwood Elementary School in Jenison, Michigan, I implemented a program to introduce third graders to ASD and the challenges it presents. This article describes the lesson, comprised of five activities, that "laid the groundwork".

My student is Alex, a third grader with autism with an engaging personality. During the first week of September, Alex's classmates had the opportunity to adjust to their new classroom and to become familiar with Alex. Noticing some of Alex's "different" behaviors, they had many questions. I worked with Alex's mother, Christine Whitmire, to provide her with information to develop a story explaining Alex's behaviors to the class. The goal of the story and my additional activities was to help the students understand and feel comfortable around Alex. While I was teaching the lesson, Alex was able to spend some time getting to know our school with our principal.

1. A Very Special Story I began by introducing myself and my role in the classroom. I explained that I am a teacher who helps students who need additional support to be successful. On this day, however, they were *all* my students. I had everyone sit on the floor around my chair for a story.

I read *The Mystery of the Clock Watcher: An Autism Story for Third Grade,* written by Alex's mother. The story assumes the perspective of classmates as they attempt to interact with a new student, Alex. Mary is the first to approach Alex with a greeting; Alex responds by walking away. Other students also approach Alex and are met with similarly unique responses. Their experiences cause them to wonder why Alex responds so differently, and raises questions in their mind. Unfamiliar with the behaviors Alex demonstrates, they are equally uncertain as to what to do. In the end, the students in the story recognize what they have in common with Alex, which leads to a class discussion about what they have discovered.

After each interaction described in the story, we discussed how the characters in the story felt and responded. Many of the behaviors described in the story had been observed first hand by my third grade audience during the first week of school. Alex had on occasion galloped around the classroom, screamed for help when an adult was not near, and moved his finger in the air as if he was writing. I answered questions and gave my students the opportunity to describe their own experiences and feelings. This helped them to understand Alex – and their role as his classmates - better. The Mystery of the Clock Watcher, which follows this article, could easily serve as a prototype for other parent-professional teams.

The Mystery of the Clock Watcher "set the stage" by acknowledging the curiosity and confusion that children feel when presented with unfamiliar responses from a peer, and demonstrating how those feelings are resolved. Just as the students in the story discuss what they have noticed about Alex, the story closed with discussion questions for Alex's current third grade classmates at Bauerwood: *1. What kinds of things do you have in common with Alex? 2. What are some ways that you can help to make your classroom comfortable for anyone that is new?* Following suit with the third graders in the story, Alex's "real" classmates picked up on their discussion, echoing the feelings of the characters in the story while at the same time beginning to focus on new, helpful ideas.

2. Similar to… YOU Having acknowledged the differences, it's also important to stress similarities. After reading the story, I demonstrated how much Alex has in common with his classmates. I described activities that Alex enjoys, and asked the students to brainstorm how they are similar to Alex. One student recorded ideas on the board. The list demonstrated shared traits and activities: a clear picture that the similarities outnumbered the differences.

I directed the students to return to their desks, providing a natural transition from a discussion of *their* observations, experiences, and feelings – to increasing their understanding of Alex's perspective. The students participated in three multi-sensory activities. Each activity demonstrated Alex's experience in the classroom, his 1) challenge in following directions; 2) feelings when faced with a difficult task; and 3) frustration in communicating clearly with others. What follows is a brief description of each activity.

3. Follow My Directions The students were directed to follow my directions *…no matter what happens.* The directives were presented in a normal tone of voice along with loud music and flashing lights, and included: *Stand up. Turn in three circles. Say "hello" to your neighbor. Complete two jumping jacks.*

Sit down. Many children had difficulty complying with my requests. This was followed by a discussion of the difference between the *intent* to follow directions and the *ability* to complete them successfully. I explained that the challenge they had following my directions is similar to Alex's experience. Although he would like to follow directions in the classroom, he may have difficulty finding the direction among other stimuli. The students identified how they can help Alex when he is unsure of directions.

4. Find the Safety Pins For this activity, each child received a bowl of rice containing closed safety pins. The directions: keep your eyes closed and retrieve the safety pins in 30 seconds. For many students this task was extremely difficult. They struggled to identify the pins. Following the activity we discussed their frustrations, as well as some of the unique strategies they discovered to complete the activity. I explained that some tasks that are easy for one person may be very challenging for others. Sometimes, we discover alternate methods to complete tasks that are difficult, so we can be more successful. Some people learn best by reading, or listening, while others learn with extra support. This helped my students understand the need for the extra adults in their classroom.

5. Excuse Me... What Did You Say? In this last activity, each student was given an ice cube, and a tongue twister written on a small piece of paper. They were directed to suck on the ice cube for 30 seconds, and then read the tongue twister aloud. Unable to speak clearly, it was difficult to understand what the students were saying and frustrating for them. *They* knew what they *wanted* to say – but couldn't clearly express it. We discussed how it helps to guide Alex with specific questions and provide him with extra time to respond.

Summary Collectively, the activities in this lesson removed the "mystery" of Alex's unique responses - replacing questions and possible misinterpretation with understanding. The discussions reflected the process of moving from wariness and caution to social understanding. Equipped with information and guided discussions, these eight and nine year olds confidently identified ways to help their classmate with autism succeed.

Today, Alex is a very important member of his classroom. The students regard Alex as a friend, and play a critical role in his support in the classroom. Throughout the school day, Alex eats, plays, and learns with his classmates. I believe that creating a sense of community around Alex, also built a secure and accepting learning environment for his classmates.

The Mystery of the Clock Watcher

An Autism Story for Third Grade

- Christine G. Whitmire

The students entering Miss Foster's third grade were very proud of their class. In second grade, they had worked well together and enjoyed learning. They had shared fun times together. They had shared a love of learning. They had helped each other. Best of all, their circle of friends grew bigger and bigger with each new student added to the class. That is, until a new student arrived on the first day of third grade.

"Hello!" said Mary, smiling, "Are you new here?"

The new student didn't answer. In fact, he hummed slightly and walked away, looking at the desks. Mary was not used to this type of response. She did not know what to do. So she did nothing. But she wondered…

What could Mary be wondering?

"Hey, would you pass me that box of colored pencils?" asked Mark, a red-haired boy at the same table as the new student in the class. Mark also had a friendly smile. The new student didn't answer. Mark thought that the new student wasn't listening.

"The pencils?" he asked again a little louder.

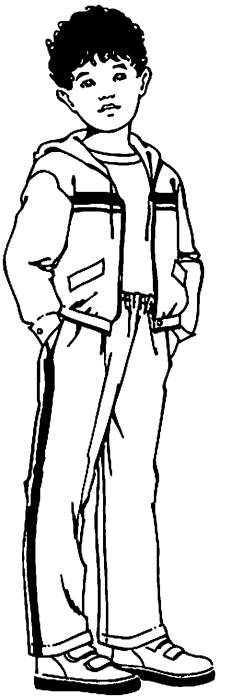
This time, the new student awkwardly touched the box of colored pencils with his fingertips and lurched around the desks, stepping on another girl's foot before putting the pencils near Mark's desk. Mark did not know how to react to this. So he did nothing. But he wondered…

What could Mark be wondering?

"It is time to practice our math skills," Miss Foster energetically remarked. "Who knows the answer to 45 + 54?"

Henry, who was sitting right next to the new student, began to feel a movement of air. He looked over to see the new student with his finger stretched out in mid air making elaborate circles and designs.

"Hey, we're supposed to write on the paper," joked Henry to the new student, hoping to make him smile. The new student didn't answer. He just gave a little hum and continued to slice the air. Henry did not know what to do. So he did nothing. But he wondered…



What could Henry be wondering?

The bell rang, its gentle tones reminding the students of time spent running with friends at recess. Brooke was at the end of the line of students who pushed open the heavy, glass door to the fresh expanse outside. She happened to look back. She saw the new student, motionless, at the metal frame of the door leading to fun and friends.

"Come on!" she called to him. "We've only got fifteen minutes!" she added cheerily.

The new student stared straight through the colorful assortment of children running over the wood chips and pavement. He didn't move or answer. As the door quietly swung shut behind him, locking him out, he turned and pressed his face against the glass.

He began to scream, "Help! Let me in! This is not the right place!" Brooke did not know what to do. So she did nothing. But she wondered...

What could Brooke be wondering?

Max saw the new student across the room, quietly munching on a granola bar as Miss Foster read to the class.

"This might be a good time to sit by the new student," he said to himself and he started walking towards him with a friendly smile on his face. As he got closer, he noticed the new student looked anxious. He had stopped eating.

"She's gone! She's gone! Where is she?" he cried frantically.

Max realized that the woman who was usually near the new student had left the room. Max turned and sat back down in his seat. He did not know what to do. So he did nothing. But he wondered...

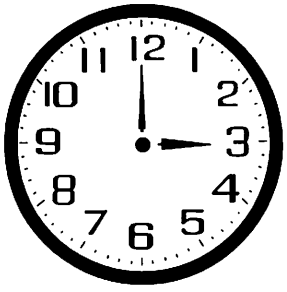
What could Max be wondering?

"I have a wonderful assignment for you today!" Miss Foster exclaimed. "We are going to create stories about something funny that has happened over this past summer!"

The students eagerly began writing their stories. As Jordan bent over her paper to begin her story, she noticed something out of the corner of her eye. The new student was not sitting at his desk writing. Instead, he was quietly pacing back and forth in the back of the classroom, while he spoke into a cassette recorder. A woman was nearby, listening intently and occasionally asking questions.

"Why doesn't he write his story down like the rest of us?" Jordan thought to herself. She did not know what to do. So she did nothing. But she wondered...

What could Jordan be wondering?



Time was very important to the new student. He wanted to know what time it was, the first thing in the morning and throughout the day. He would ask repeatedly, "What's next? What time is it? When are we finished? When can we go home?"

The other students in Miss Foster's classroom began to notice that the new student who had come to their friendly classroom was avidly watching the clock, every day. They did not know what to do. So they did nothing. But they wondered...

What could the entire class be wondering?

Finally, the mystery of the "Clock Watcher" became too puzzling for the students. They decided to go to Miss Foster for help.

"Miss Foster, we don't understand! We don't know *how* to be friends with this new student. Will you help us?"

Miss Foster began, "Our new student, Alex, has autism. A person with autism may learn differently than you do. A person with autism has difficulty communicating. A person with autism may not understand how to make friends. He may also play differently than you. Maybe you can use this information to discover for yourselves why our new friend, Alex, acts the way he does in school. You may also discover that you have a lot in common with him. Through observation, you might learn how to become friends with him."

The students in Miss Foster's third grade were united. They decided to take Miss Foster's challenge and solve the mystery of their new student, Alex. They would look for clues to help them understand this new member of their class. They would try to learn how to be his friend.

What are you able to learn from someone's behavior?

What would you do to solve the mystery?

At school the next morning, Mary watched Alex while they were getting their materials for the day. She noticed that he was usually very quiet. He had a nice smile. She noticed that sometimes he would glance up at Mary and the other students sitting in their group... *then* he seemed to be listening.

She decided to try saying "Hello" again. This time, she waited until she saw his eyes looking at her.

To her delight, Alex spoke a muffled "Hi!" and hummed.

"Maybe we need to make sure Alex is listening before we begin talking with him," Mary thought.

At recess, Mark took time to watch Alex for a while on the playground. Mark noticed that although Alex moved awkwardly in the classroom and had difficulty writing, Alex was really good at climbing on the monkey bars.

"I like the monkey bars, too," he thought, "...and sometimes I don't like to write, either!" Mark thought back to the day when he asked Alex for a pencil, and Alex stepped on the girl's foot. "Maybe he didn't realize how close he was to her feet."

Henry decided he would watch for clues to the mystery of the "air writing". One day, to Henry's surprise, Alex finished a math review sheet before everyone else.

"Could he be writing the math problems and answers in the air?" he wondered. Henry decided he would watch the way Alex's finger traced in front of him. Sure enough, the numbers were there. And, as Alex spoke, he saw that he was actually writing the words he was speaking!

As the school year continued, Brooke noticed that Alex did not stop at the door leading to the playground anymore. Instead, he began to move more freely around the swings and slide.

One day, as Brooke watched Alex make his way onto the playground, she thought, "Maybe Alex got scared because everything was new at first, and different from his old school. Maybe we just have to help him learn about all of the new people and places here. If Alex knew when something different was going to happen in our classroom, maybe he wouldn't feel so lost and upset." Brooke had discovered why Alex felt the need to watch the time all day long.

"You know what I think?" she whispered to Mary during class, "I think that Alex will not be so worried about the clock once he gets to know our school schedule better."

The students in Miss Foster's class noticed two women who were often at Alex's desk. Not only would these teachers help Alex, they would also help other students in the class who came to them with questions. They were important people in the classroom, too.

"Why are these teachers here?" the students finally asked Miss Foster.

"Well," she began, smiling, "for you to do your best in school, you need a teacher and a comfortable classroom. For Alex to do his best, he may need extra help at times. We want everyone to be able to do his or her best in our school."

The students nodded, knowing that they had solved another mysterious clue.

One discovery happened outside of school. Max and his family began to walk through the sporting goods store and into the mall when they heard some quiet applause. Located in the store was a large climbing wall. Looking up, Max noticed someone climbing the wall. A boy had just reached the top and slapped the red button that started the song, "Yankee Doodle Dandy". A few seconds later, he recognized the boy. The boy was Alex!

Max was surprised. "I like climbing the wall, too," he thought.

Looking around at the bottom of the wall he noticed a dark-haired man, a woman in overalls and a little blonde-haired girl. They met Alex at the bottom of the wall and congratulated him with hugs. Max realized that his family would have done the same for him.

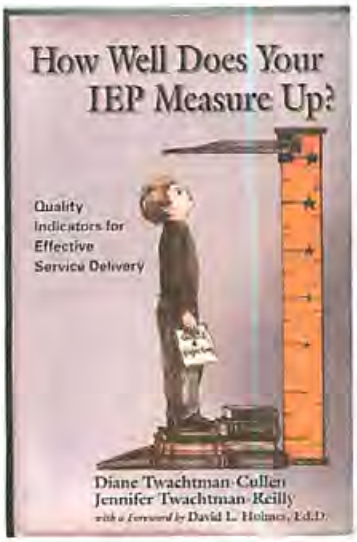
The students in Miss Foster's class gathered to share their stories of what they had learned about their new friend, Alex. They were beginning to realize how much they had in common with him. They were learning how to be good friends to Alex. The "Mystery of the Clock Watcher" was on the way to being solved... and their circle of friends grew even bigger that day.

What kinds of things do you have in common with Alex?

What are some ways that you can help to make your classroom comfortable for anyone that is new?

Having Read "How Well Does Your IEP Measure Up" by Diane Twachtman-Cullen and Jennifer Twachtman-Reilly, Parents & Professionals Will Collaborate to Improve the Document that Drives Educational Programming

- book review by Carol Gray



What fascinates me about my friend, Dr. Diane Twachtman-Cullen, is the topics she writes about. Assuming that authors explore areas that captivate their interest, I can only guess that Diane's next efforts may be to turn hurricanes back to sea. Diane consistently explores and explains stormy educational fronts that would intimidate the bravest professionals in the field of education. In terms of "going where angels fear to tread"... Diane not only goes there, she runs back and convinces the angels its okay to tread where they hadn't dared. She guides our consideration of topics like facilitated communication, training for paraprofessionals, and bullying. Each time, she defines our thinking and provides practical, logical direction.

Like mother, like daughter. Now, Diane's daughter Jennifer is doing the same thing! Together they make a wonderful team. Their first co-authored book, *How Well Does Your IEP Measure Up?* takes a close and critical look at the document that drives a child's educational program, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP): most specifically at the quality of the words that fill each blank. In their own words, "...this book is about how to write thoughtful, intelligent IEPs that deliver high-quality need-based educational programming to students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)" (p. xv). The intent of this review is to introduce you to some of the key points of the book, and to share with you my thoughts and reactions as a consultant in the field.

Diane and Jennifer have organized the book into two parts: *Part One: The Essential Elements of the IEP,* and *Part Two: IEP Goal and Objective Templates.* To anyone who has learned to drive, Part One is everything you learned to take the written test. Part Two is everything you wished you remembered about the written test as the policeman rides in the seat next to you during the road test. So, naturally, I went to Part Two first... because it looked like more fun. It isn't, without Part One. Initially, the book lays the foundation to prepare parents and professionals to "take the wheel" when developing an IEP.

Part One: The Essential Elements of the IEP The authors use an analogy of a blueprint to establish the framework for their information. Part One describes the elements of an IEP as containing "...the

exact specifications necessary to guide the 'builders' of educational programs" (p. xvi). Beginning with the enactment of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) that ensured a *free appropriate public education* for all students, this history tour includes the influence of the efforts of parents as well as defining Supreme Court decisions. In five pages this lesson is complete – succinctly recognizing the imfluence of the past, while placing an emphasis on *understanding the intent of the law* and *creating an effective educational plan.*

A short review of the Table of Contents reveals the extensive detail that is contained in Part One. Entire chapters focus on each facet of an IEP, one step at a time. For example, consider these representative chapter titles: *Present Levels of Performance, The Underlying Conditions Governing Performance, Criteria and Prompt Levels, Goals and Objectives*, and *Measurement, Data Collection, and Evaluation.* Parents and professionals will readily recognize this terminology - blanks on an IEP form that take only moments to complete. It is, in fact, the understanding of those blanks, their potential power and influence, and the importance of the words used to complete them that so aptly comes across with the patient, thorough and thoughtful discussion in each chapter.

Part Two: IEP Goal and Objective Templates Like being placed in a car with an automatic gear shift on an open and uncomplicated road for a driving test, the information in part one eliminates the nervous search for the ignition or the confusion at that four-way stop. Understanding the vehicle and the process of driving, old skills are improved and new skills move to within grasp. The rubber hits the road.

The second half of How Well Does Your IEP Measure Up? serves as a guide to improve the goals and objectives we've been writing all along, although the real excitement is in learning to develop goals and objectives to address the core deficits in ASD (*social communication, executive function, information processing,* and *critical thinking*). In the process of learning how well a student's IEP measures up, the reader learns to extend the educational ruler into a yardstick. Equipped with an accurate understanding of the history and the details, it becomes possible to move into uncharted educational territory where the angels can now not only tread, but run.

Translating this book into practice for me is very tangible: the book comes with me to IEP planning meetings, just as though Diane and Jennifer sit with me, close at hand. A good friend is many things... including helpful. When that assistance results in learning to define and structure the effort and exploration that is at the center of educating each child with ASD, well, that's a book that will be a friend to many.

A Review of *My Friend with Autism*
by Beverly Bishop, illustrated by Craig Bishop

- Angela Telfer, Consultant to Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency

My Friend with Autism is a new book that introduces children and parents to autism spectrum disorders. This creative approach to "laying the groundwork" positively shares information to help early elementary students understand their included classmate. Designed to be inexpensive, so that each student in the classroom may have a copy of their own to take home, parents will discover additional information about autism at the close of the book. What a fun way to share information about autism spectrum disorders with general education students and their parents!

The book is written by Beverly Bishop, a parent of a child with autism, and illustrated by her husband's uncle, Craig Bishop. In My Friend with Autism, Beverly describes the perspective and experience of a child with autism, de-mystifying behaviors that would otherwise seem puzzling.

My Friend with Autism is a valuable resource for helping children understand the value of individual differences. Children also learn what they have in common with the child with ASD with a description of similar interests and skills. This creates a common ground for new friendships. The book includes helpful responses to unfamiliar behaviors, and suggestions for being a friend to a child with autism. Clear, concrete examples are easy for children to relate to, making the information easy to understand.

I had the privilege of presenting My Friend with Autism to several classrooms. The children responded with interest, enthusiasm and concern for their friend with autism. The children especially enjoyed having their own copy to color and take home. The general education teachers were also enthusiastic. One teacher said, "This is a great teaching tool! I wish I had this book a few years ago."

As mentioned earlier, each copy of My Friend with Autism contains valuable information for parents and professionals. In this section at the close of the book, each page of the children's story is described in detail, offering insight and suggestions to support children with ASD. One teacher, who has had several students with autism in her classroom over the years said, "This was great for me! I learned so much from this book. It was easy to understand and a great, quick way to get very helpful information."

Placing this book in the home of every classmate creates a unique opportunity to educate each child's parents, and provides a resource that can be referred to when questions arise. Having accurate information about autism supports general education parents in their efforts to explain autism - and the unique behaviors that may be observed in the classroom or at school events - to their child. Parents' comments echo the importance of having access to accurate information: "The book was easy for my child to understand and very informative for me," "The book has been helpful for us in teaching Jessica how to be a friend. My husband and I have also learned more about autism." The parents who responded to our survey all agreed that they learned about autism.

My Friend with Autism is an exciting way to educate children and adults about autism. It creatively fills a void in the autism literature. More than just "another children's book about autism", it is a lesson that teaches diversity and social respect to both children and adults.

For more information on the availability of My Friend with Autism, and/or to learn how to order, please contact Future Horizons at 1-800-489-0727, or visit their website at www.FutureHorizons-Autism.com .

The Sixth Sense II

- Carol Gray
Consultant to Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Jenison Public Schools, Jenison, Michigan USA

This parent-professional guide belongs to

_____

Illustrations by Microsoft Word ClipArt & Art Explosion, Nova Development.

My sincere appreciation to
Karen Lind, Sue Jonker, and Laurel Hoekman for their critical review and assistance with The Sixth Sense II, and to my husband, Brian Gray, for his unfaltering encouragement.

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The Sixth Sense II

A revised and expanded version
of the original 1993 lesson plan

- Carol Gray, Consultant to Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

To all children, with respect for their natural curiosity about others.

Preface

During the last decade, the identification of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) has resulted in an increasing awareness of their unique social challenges. Children diagnosed with high functioning autism and Asperger Syndrome are often included in general education settings. Here, they struggle to cope with the many interactions and social situations that comprise each school day; sometimes demonstrating unique responses that capture the attention, curiosity, and/or wariness of their classmates. The behavior of a child with ASD can be puzzling: *Why does this new classmate - who uses big words and knows so much about dinosaurs - never answer when we say "Hi"?*

In the newly released book, *The Friendship Factor* (2002), Kenneth Rubin Ph.D. summarizes over twenty years of research on social and emotional development in childhood and the critical role of parents in helping their child "navigate the social world". Dr. Rubin indicates that by the age of six or seven, children begin to make social comparisons, noting their own strengths and weaknesses relative to their peers. As a child's world expands from "me" to "me and everyone else", the social map adds increasing detail. Children who have unique responses will be noticed and questions will arise. Without answers, children may begin to believe it's wrong to ask - or come to unguided social conclusions of their own. The question is not, "Should we tell John's classmates that he has unique challenges?" when they most likely already *know* that John responds differently to many situations. Ultimately, the question is much broader. How can we create a learning environment where all children feel socially safe and comfortable?

In 1993, *The Sixth Sense* was developed to share information about autism spectrum disorders with general education students, to explain behaviors that might otherwise be misinterpreted as frightening, odd, or rude. Originally published as part of *Taming the Recess Jungle* (Gray, 1993), the rationale was that students would be better equipped to include a classmate with unique behaviors when provided with accurate social information. Using the five senses as a frame of reference, the original *Sixth Sense* introduced students to their sixth - or social - sense via activities and discussion.

The Sixth Sense II is more comprehensive than its predecessor and appropriate for elementary students ages 7-12. The lesson plan is comprised of six segments:

1) Introduction
2) Review of the 5 Senses
3) Perspective-taking and the Sixth Sense
4) What is it like to have a Sixth Sense impairment?
5) How can we help?
6) Summary

Unlike the original lesson plan, The Sixth Sense II includes two appendixes that further expand and update the information. *Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers* provides parents and professionals with information they will need to implement The Sixth Sense II, including ideas to reinforce the concepts with related activities. *Appendix B: Related Resources* lists and describes materials to enhance efforts to create and maintain a positive social environment. In addition to sharing new information in the appendixes, we are also *recruiting* new ideas from you. The form titled *The Sixth Sense II ...and YOU* on page 23 is an invitation to provide us with your feedback and suggestions.

It is our hope that The Sixth Sense II will continue the work of the original: to promote understanding and supportive social climates for children with autism spectrum disorders.

The Sixth Sense II

- Carol Gray, Consultant to Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

Goal: To improve student understanding and support of classmates with autistic spectrum disorders.

Objectives:

1) Students will identify how the five senses help us gather information
2) Students will list ideas to assist a classmate with a visual or hearing impairment
3) Students will learn how people make guesses about what others perceive, know and feel
4) Students will describe why our "social sense" may be considered "the sixth sense"
5) Students will describe the challenges experienced by children with visual/hearing impairments
6) Students will identify possible challenges experienced by a classmate who has a social-communication impairment
8) Students will list ideas to assist a classmate with a social-communication impairment

Materials:

1) Small item to hide (teddy bear)
2) Chalk or laminate board or overhead projector
3) Large photos or drawings of: eye, nose, mouth, ear, hand; children playing sports; and/or photos depicting basic emotions

Time to Implement: One to two hours. Several lists are created - do not erase until lesson is completed.

Important Note: Discuss The Sixth Sense II with the parents of the child with the autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) in advance. It is likely that parents will have questions, or that modifications will be required to tailor the lesson. For more information, see Appendix A: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions, and Appendix B: Related Resources.

Directions appear in plain text. *Italics* are used to indicate suggested script.

Introduction

Today I am going to share some important information with you about your classmate, _____. I am sure you have noticed that like you, _____ (likes to) (is interested in) _____. Like you, _____ does many things well. And, like you, _____ sometimes needs help. _____ needs help working and playing with others. We can help. The first step is to understand why working and playing with others is sometimes more difficult for_____. Listen carefully to this information. I know it will give you some ideas as to how we can help _____. Your ideas will be important as we work together to develop a plan to assist_____.

Review of the Five Senses:

A review of the five senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch provide a backdrop of familiar information prior to the introduction of Sixth Sense concepts. Lead a discussion of the five basic senses. Use photos/drawings to enhance the discussion. At the same time list/answer the following:

1) What information do you gather with your sense of _____?
2) Did anyone teach you how to see/hear/taste/touch/smell?

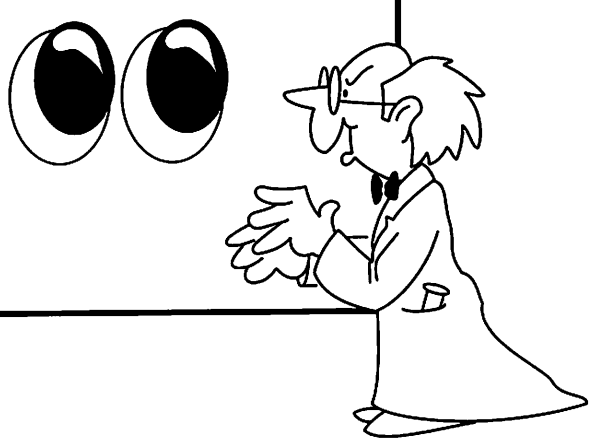
Next, focus on vision and hearing. Add to the lists of vision and hearing with discussion of the following:

3) What would it be like without the ability to see/hear?
4) What could you do to help a classmate who could not see/hear?

What follows is a sample list for sight with an accompanying illustration:

Sight

1. Helps us to see where we are going, read, keep safe, play ball, find things
2. No one teaches us to see. Sight is a "sense".
3. People who cannot see:
   - might need help to get around safely.
   - cannot read as most people do
4. Ideas to help a classmate who can't see:
   - Braille
   - help them on the playground
   - keep things in their place in the classroom



Perspective-taking and the Sixth Sense

The discussion of the five senses – and the information they provide - creates a natural introduction to the Sixth Sense. The lesson proceeds with a demonstration of how we also know what *other* people can see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. Two perspective-taking activities help students discover how we can assume another person's perceptual (sensory) and cognitive (what others know) perspective by making very accurate guesses. A third activity explores the clues to the feelings of others (affective perspective).

We've listed the five senses on the board. No one taught you to see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. You also have a social sense – some abilities that help you to work and play with others. I'll show you how the social sense works.

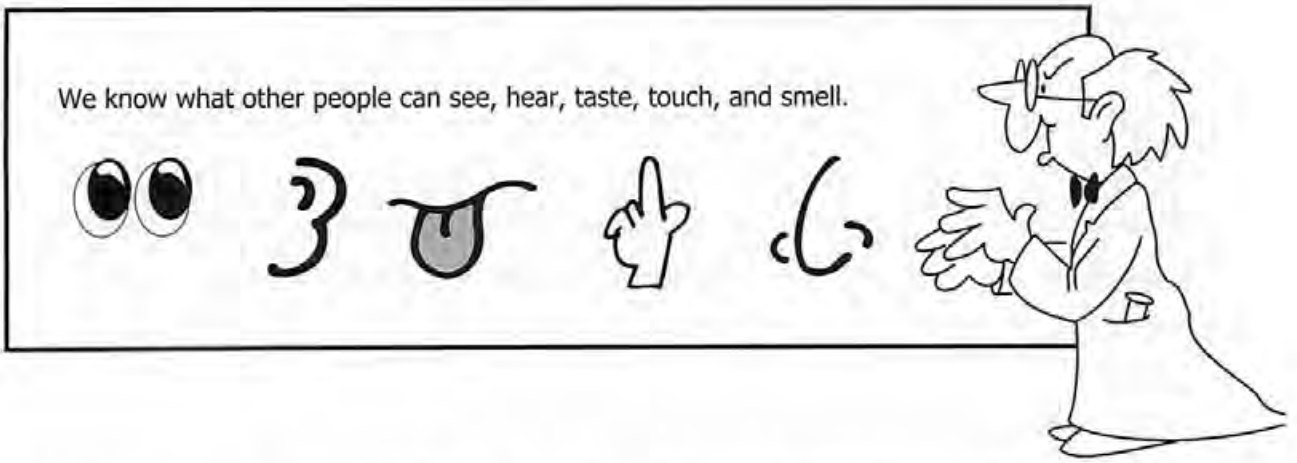
Perceptual perspective-taking activity:

In this activity, students discover their ability to "see the world" through another person's eyes; to accurately identify what someone can see, hear, taste, smell, and/or touch, even from a distance. Still focusing on the basic senses, in this activity children discover that their knowledge of what other people perceive provides them with valuable information. This activity is based on the work of Dawson & Fernald (1987).

- Ask for a student volunteer from the back half of the classroom. Direct this student to remain seated.
- Ask that student to briefly describe things he/she can see from his/her seat. For example, the student may identify the board, classroom clock, or posters.
- Ask the student to identify things YOU see. The student may identify the students, their desks, the bulletin board display at the back of the classroom, etc.
- Identify items that are behind you, for example, the chalkboard and clock. Facing the student with your back to those items, ask the student if you can see them from your current position. The student should reply in the negative. Ask the student, *How did you do that? How did you know what I can see?*

We know what others can see, hear, smell, taste, or touch, even if we are not right there with them. Did someone teach you to do that, or did you "just know"?

Record this information in the center of the chalkboard as illustrated at the top of the next page:

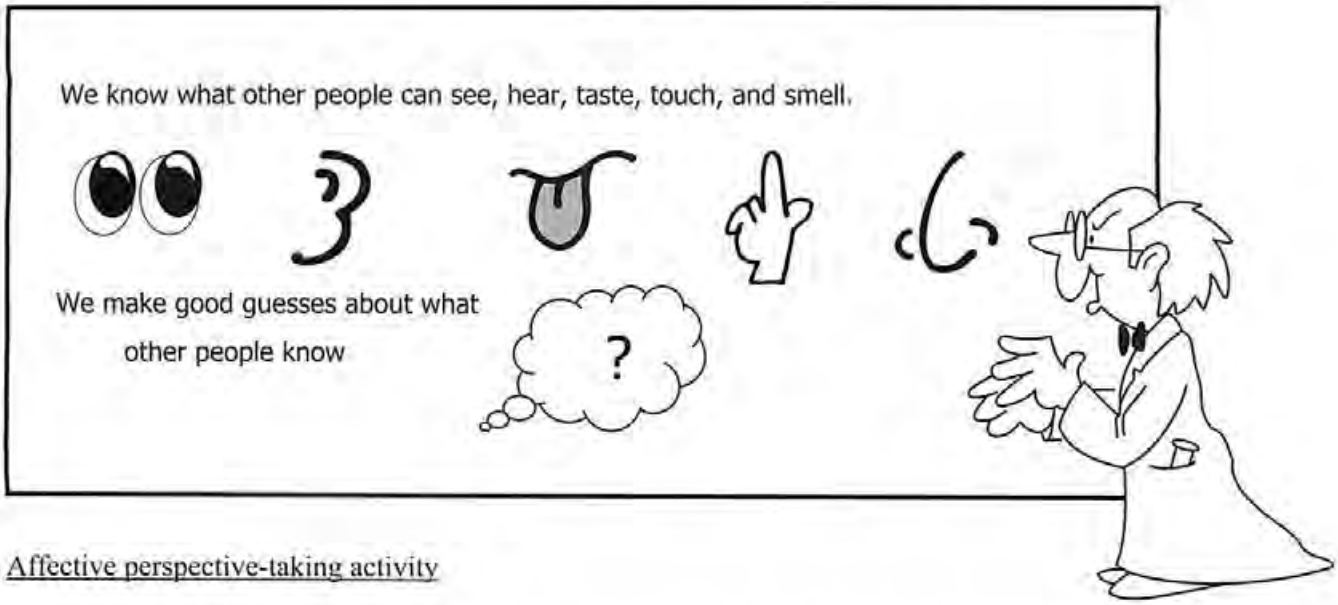


Cognitive perspective-taking activity (based on Baron-Cohen et al. 1985, Wimmer & Perner, 1983)

Compared to the previous visual perspective-taking activity, the cognitive perspective-taking activity is a little more difficult – and also more interesting. Moving beyond the five senses, the students discover how they "automatically" keep track of what another person knows - based on their knowledge of that person's experiences. This can be a very intriguing activity for elementary students, as they discover that people make very accurate guesses about what others know and/or are thinking. This ability helps people to predict the actions and responses of others. In the literature it is referred to as "theory of mind" (Baron-Cohen et al. 1985). The following activity is based on the work of Baron-Cohen (1985) and Wimmer & Perner (1983). The use of an attractive small object, and a step-by-step approach, simplify the concept:

- Ensure that all students are watching as you hide the small object (teddy bear), announcing its location in the process. *Watch closely as I hide the teddy bear in my desk drawer.*
- Ask for a volunteer (Adam).
- Direct Adam to leave the room and to remain out of view of the classroom.
- Once Adam is out of the room, silently establish everyone's attention.
- Moving slowly, remove the small item (teddy bear) from its current location (desk drawer) and place it in a new hiding place.
- Invite Adam to return to his seat, thanking him for his cooperation.

If I ask Adam to look for the teddy bear, where is he likely to look first? Why? We keep track of what other people know. Can we "read someone's mind" or do we make a guess? Actually, we make very good guesses about what other people know. Did someone teach us to do that, or is it automatic, like our senses? Add to what is already in the center of the chalkboard:

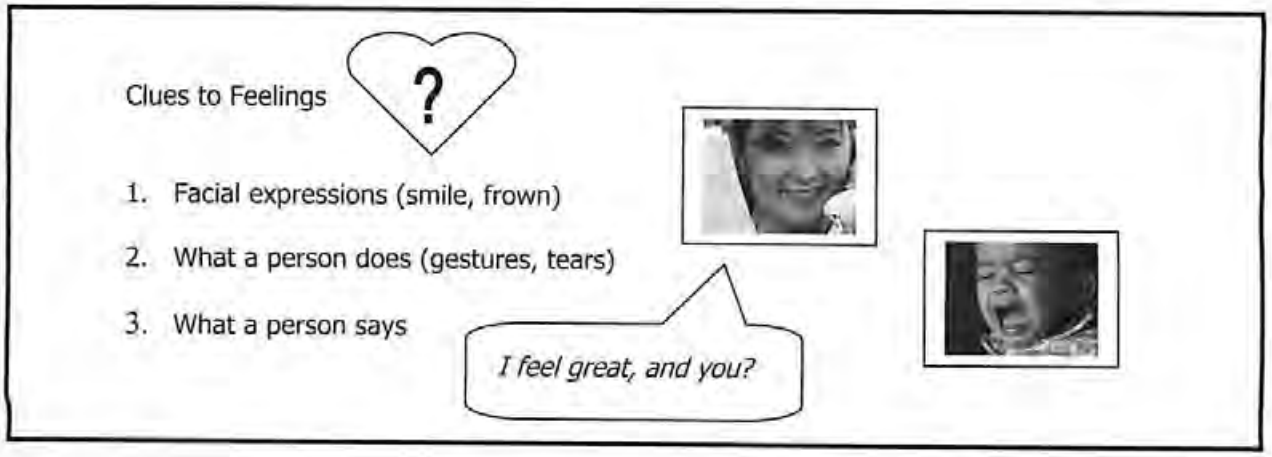


Affective perspective-taking activity

Accurately assessing the affective, or emotional, perspective of another person is complex, and admittedly in some situations may elude even the most sensitive adults! Here, the discussion of emotions and their related cues is kept brief and basic. This keeps the content within the developmental reach of the audience, and introduces the concept without "losing sight" of the goal of the lesson.

- Display the large photos/drawings of basic feelings.
- Identify the emotion depicted in each.
- Discuss basic cues to feelings.

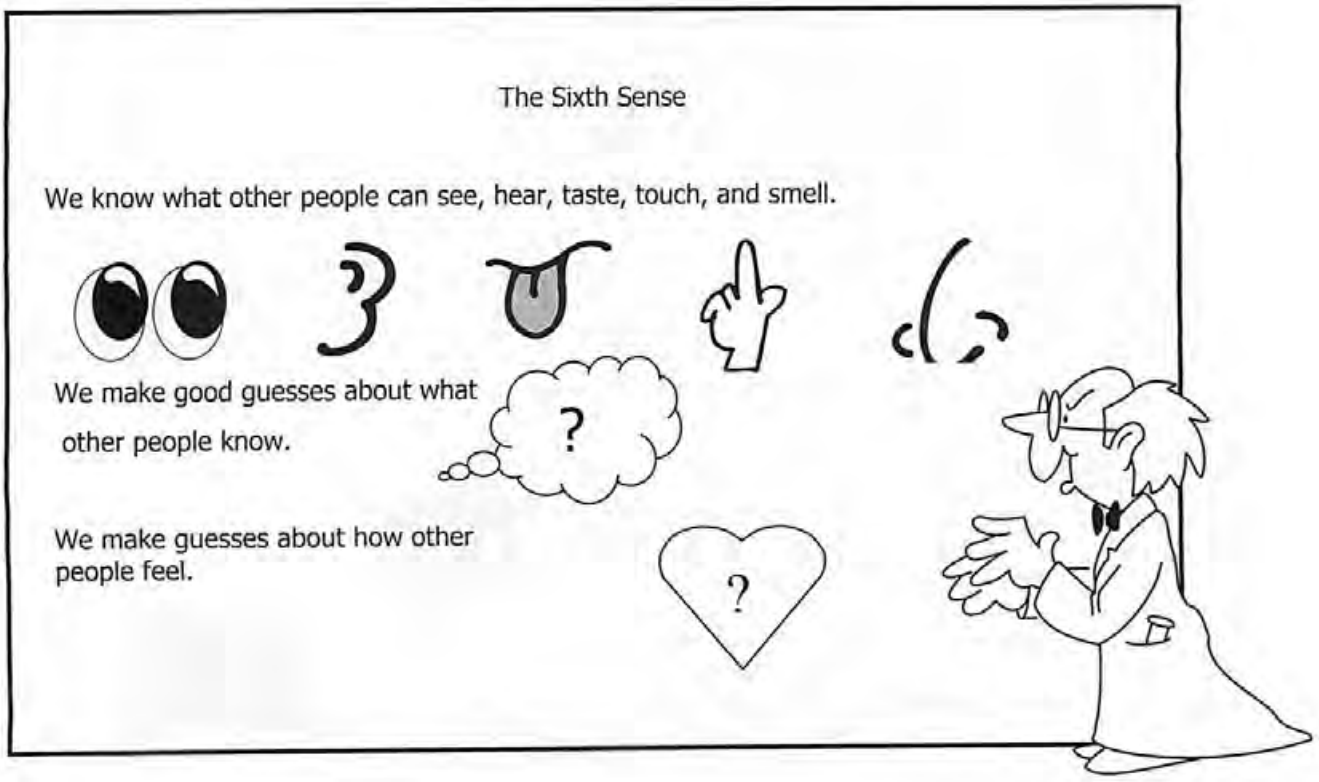
Can you tell what someone is feeling? What are some clues you use to learn how someone is feeling?
Record ideas and illustrate on board:



We can make good guesses about how someone is feeling. We use clues to help us guess. As you have listed here, we may look to someone's face for a clue to their feelings. If someone is smiling, a good guess is that they are feeling happy. Or, if someone is frowning, we guess that they are probably feeling worried or sad. We also may look at what someone is doing. For example, when someone is crying, that gives us a big clue as to their feelings. Or, if someone is cheering and jumping up and down, it's a big clue that they are very excited. Sometimes, the clues are not as obvious. We may notice that someone who usually walks quickly is moving very slowly. Another clue to what a person is feeling is to listen to what that person says. We use these clues to make very good guesses about the feelings of others.

Look at our list in the center of the board: We know what other people see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. We guess what other people know. We guess how other people feel. This gives us lots of information about one another and helps us to work and play together. This is our sixth, or social, sense. Let's title our list, The Sixth Sense.

Add to the main list in the center of the board, along with simple illustrations. Review and title the list as illustrated below:



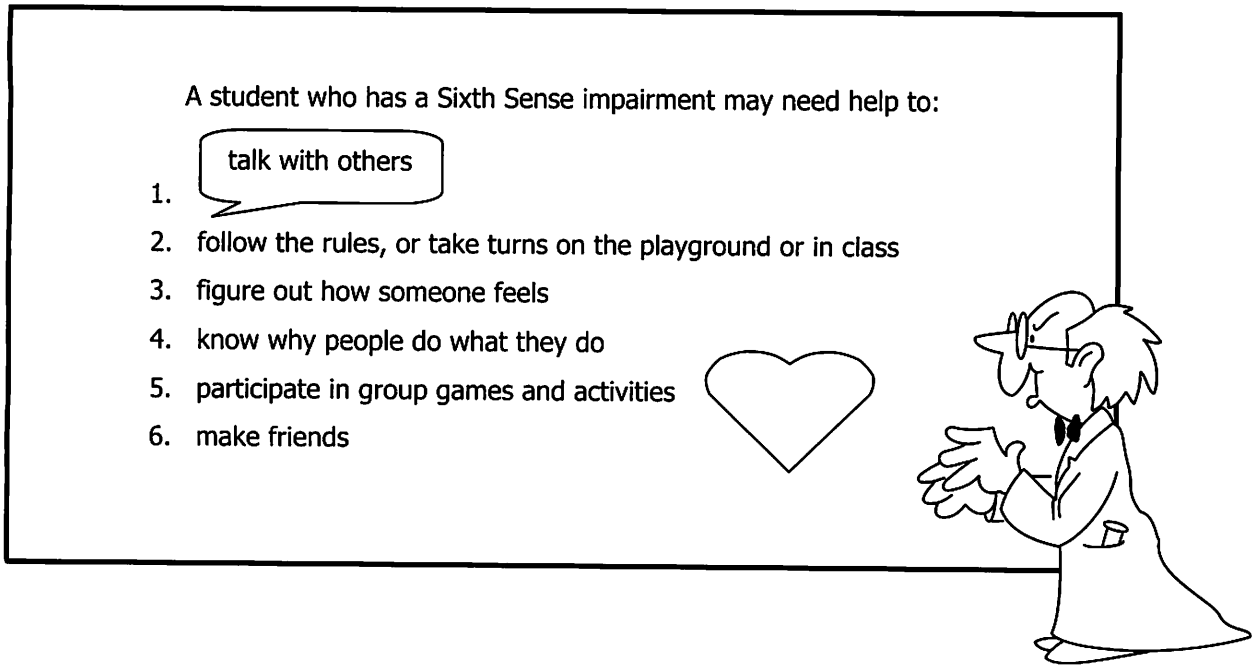
What is it like to have a Sixth Sense impairment?

In this segment of *The Sixth Sense II*, students are guided as they consider what it would be like to have a social-communication impairment. Having discussed their ability to take the perspective of other people, this ability is now put to an active test. Identifying the specific challenges of a person who cannot see or hear is likely to be easier than imagining the daily struggles of a classmate with ASD. Unlike the sense of sight or hearing, the Sixth Sense is a new concept. For this reason, students may need some guiding questions to formulate these new ideas.

What do you think it would be like to have difficulty with the Sixth Sense? I'd like to hear your ideas – let's create a list of challenges that children with Sixth Sense impairments face.

- *Would it be easy or difficult to take turns if you didn't know what others are thinking, or how they feel?*
- *Would it be easy or difficult to talk to others about something they did? Why?*
- *Would it be easy or difficult to understand why we need rules for games? Why?*
- *Would it be easy or difficult to understand why people do things? Why?*
- *Would some things that people do take you by surprise? Why?*
- *Would people frighten you sometimes?*
- *Would it be easy or difficult to make friends?*

Create a new list on the board recording the students' ideas, as illustrated below:



We can all use help with these skills sometimes. In our class, Andrew may need help more often. Andrew has difficulty with the Sixth Sense. Andrew also has many wonderful talents and skills. For example, you probably have seen how well Andrew reads. You may have seen his skill on the computer! Andrew may be able to help some of us with reading or the computer. In the same way, we can help Andrew with the Sixth Sense. That's what being a member of this class is all about – it's important to help one another. Next, we'll talk about how we can help Andrew.

How can we help?

Creating a list of ideas to assist a classmate with ASD is the final segment of *The Sixth Sense II.* This is a real opportunity to "pull everything together"; it is the "grand finale" of the entire lesson. It is also an opportunity to add important personal detail - for students to share behaviors they have observed and consider them in light of what they have learned. Stressing confidentiality reinforces the responsibility inherent in sharing personal information with others. This activity gives practical application to the general information and specific concerns, and supports students as they take ownership of an important part of the social solution. Ultimately, the process followed in this final step - pulling social information together to arrive at new solutions – is a prototype for learning and applying social understanding with other people in a variety of settings.

It is no surprise that many of the lists created earlier in the lesson can support students as they develop their list of helpful responses. First, it may be helpful to open this activity by praising the students' previous success in creating a list of ideas to help someone who is blind or deaf (p. 3), and provides a model for the current task. Second, inviting students to review their description of the Sixth Sense (p. 8) assists them as they make the connection between "what it would be like" and "helpful ideas." Finally, the list of challenges developed in the previous activity provides a frame of reference for identifying new ideas to assist their classmate:

Earlier you listed what it might be like if you could not see (hear). You had some wonderful ideas about how you can assist someone who cannot see (hear). Let's look at the list you developed. One idea is to help that student get around on the playground. Another is to keep things in place in the classroom so that classroom items will be easier to find. These are great ideas.

Understanding why Andrew sometimes has difficulty working and playing with others can make it easier for us to help him. For example, let's look at our description of the Sixth Sense. Perhaps one reason

Andrew rarely talks with others is because he doesn't know where to start – he may not be able to make those important guesses about what other people know or feel – as quickly or easily as you and I do. Keeping this in mind will help us figure out how we can help.

Let's look at the list you just developed. Here, you identified some challenges for people who have difficulty with the Sixth Sense. Using this list as a guide, try to brainstorm ideas that we can use to help Andrew in school and on the playground. For example, you said that, "A student who has a Sixth Sense impairment may need help to talk with others". I think this may be true for Andrew.

- *Have you noticed any times when Andrew has had difficulty talking with others? What happened?*
- *What are your ideas?*
- *What can we do to help Andrew?*

Guide a discussion of ideas to support Andrew and record as illustrated:

Helpful Ideas

1. Start the conversation. Ask Andrew to join us at lunch.
2. Write down the rules to games. Stay calm as Andrew learns to take turns.
3. Understand Andrew has feelings too, be friendly.
4. Help Andrew "find his place" and follow directions.
5. Be patient if Andrew picks up and runs with the base after Ben said, "Steal the base."
6. At first, ask an adult to help when playing with Andrew.

Summary

The Sixth Sense II is a lesson plan that shares accurate information about ASD with general education students. This lesson uses interesting activities and discussion to replace the "student theories" surrounding puzzling behaviors with accurate information based on autism research. This information is used to develop a list of helpful responses and student-generated solutions.

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APPENDIX A The Sixth Sense II: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

What goes into a decision to use The Sixth Sense II? What factors should be considered?

It's an important process that determines if The Sixth Sense II is right for a student, his/her parents, and classroom. Pre-requisite to the success of the program is the comfort of everyone involved. Parents and professionals carefully review the lesson plan to decide if it will be beneficial, with the understanding that modifications can be made to tailor The Sixth Sense II to an individual student and situation.

In general, a decision to use The Sixth Sense II is made with consideration of the following factors:

1) Does the child know his/her diagnosis? Experience suggests that it is best that a student know his/her diagnosis prior to implementing The Sixth Sense II. For more resources and information on sharing the diagnosis, see the answer to the following question, and Appendix B: Related Resources.
2) Is it possible to include the student in planning? If so, how? In most cases, it's important for the student to understand the purpose and content of the activity. Often, soon after a student learns of his/her diagnosis, The Sixth Sense is implemented in his/her classroom.
3) Have other students in the class observed behaviors demonstrated by the student with ASD that may be confusing? Do they seem wary of behaviors that are not typical, but otherwise harmless? Providing students with information about why some behaviors occur can positively impact attitudes and acceptance, which serve as an anecdote to negative teasing.
4) Are the parents and professionals comfortable with sharing information about their student with a classroom of children? This is very important, as the attitude of the adults toward the activity will be "picked up" by students. This is an excellent time to teach the meaning of confidentiality, and to set the expectation that it will be followed, with the understanding that children may make mistakes and need to be reminded of its importance.
5) The goal is to share accurate social information. Is The Sixth Sense II the best method for this student and situation? A decision may be made to talk with students about a child's diagnosis and/or strengths and challenges, but to use an approach other than The Sixth Sense II. Parents and professionals may creatively use commercially available resources listed in Appendix B: Related Resources to reach this goal. Or, these same resources may be used with The Sixth Sense II to complement key concepts.

Ultimately, the decision to use The Sixth Sense II is made by the student and his/her parents.

Any suggestions regarding sharing the diagnosis with my child?

The decision to share information with a child about his/her diagnosis - and how to best approach it - is dependent upon a few factors. First, there is no "right age" or date on the calendar that indicates a perfect moment in time for explaining an autism continuum diagnosis to a child. A child's age, ability, social awareness, and personality may all play a role in determining *when* to explore this topic. Collectively, these factors impact on a child's *readiness* to learn more about his/her individual strengths and weaknesses. If a child is making comparisons of himself in contrast to his peers - specifically if those comparisons are related to social concerns - it may be a good time to explain the diagnosis. One indicator that a child wants to learn more about him/herself is when the child begins asking for that type of information. If the child is ready to ask the question, s/he's ready for the answer to *that* question.

The process of sharing this information – in other words *how* to explain the diagnosis – in general mirrors the experience of all children as they discover their individual talents and challenges. For example, Peter

shares the frustration of not being able to solve math problems as accurately or quickly as the child who sits next to him. Peter is reassured that while he may need to work a little harder at math to achieve the same end, others may need to practice for hours to run as fast as Peter – and may never catch up! In the same way a typical child learns about personal talents and challenges, so, too, can the child with ASD learn it is okay to learn social concepts at his/her own pace. Discovering the strengths and weaknesses that comprise the unique human package that is *you* is a part of growing up. So while the initial thought of sharing a diagnosis may be a little intimidating for parents, looking to what we know about typical children often provides a few guideposts.

The challenge for parents and professionals is to answer a child's questions as they emerge... *and nothing more.* This task is not as simple as it may appear at face value, as it requires 1) careful consideration of the child's question and 2) a quick sifting through lots of information to identify what the child wants and needs to know now. This leads to a reassuring realization: explaining an autism spectrum diagnosis occurs as a *process* that spans years. This answer will grow along with the complexity of a child's questions, gaining detail and depth over time. No need to paint the whole picture, instead, this first step is simply to introduce the paint box.

Articles and resources are available to guide the efforts of parents and professionals as they introduce and explore a diagnosis on the autism spectrum with a child. For example, *Pictures of Me* (Gray, 1996) is a Social Story that introduces a child to his/her personality, talents, and diagnosis via a series of activities completed by the child, his parents, and professionals (optional). Pictures of Me first appeared in *The Morning News* in the fall of 1996. Included in the same issue are other articles, including one by parents, Ellen Tanis and Debi Donaldson, and others by Dr. Tony Attwood and Edna Smith, Ph.D., related to helping a child, friends and family understand the diagnosis. (For a full reference and ordering information for the fall 1996 issue of The Morning News, see Appendix B, p. 18). In the Spring-Summer 2002 issue of The Morning News (originally surrounding this rip-out section), a parent, Laurel Hoekman, describes the experience of sharing the diagnosis with her two sons, Benjamin and Nathan (pp. 2-6).

If Pictures of Me is the paint box, other resources help parents and professionals sketch in details and add color to a child's understanding of his/her diagnostic picture over time. The workbook, *What Does It Mean to Me* (Faherty, 2000) has the potential of a great friend in the self-discovery process. It provides systematic exploration of several topics, one step at a time, patiently guiding a child and his/her team in their efforts to understand the diagnosis. (See Appendix B for reference and ordering information).

Once a decision to use The Sixth Sense is made, what's the next step?

The most important "next step" is to use the lesson plan as a *guide:* review it and if necessary revise the plan to meet the needs of everyone involved. Consider making general revisions to the content and activities, and pay attention to the suggested script and wording of key concepts. For example, Dr. Tony Attwood suggests that it is not necessary to mention the specific diagnosis in the course of The Sixth Sense. Instead, he suggests placing the emphasis on developing sensitivity to the experience of the student with ASD. Another possible revision is to avoid any reference to a specific student, instead focusing on assisting *any student* who has difficulty playing and working with others. The drawback to this is "watering down" the focus to such an extent that the original intent dissolves, in which case the opportunity to create a supportive learning environment for the student with ASD is missed.

In addition to taking care to tailor the lesson plan, it's important not to overlook practical considerations. The Sixth Sense II can help a team determine *what* information to include and *how* to present it, but what about *when* and *where?* School and classroom schedules can be complicated. Select a time slot that is not in competition with an activity or subject that is highly popular with the students. This helps to ensure

that students will be focused on the task at hand, undistracted by "where they would rather be" at the time. Also, try to select a time when most children will be present, including classroom leaders. This can be a challenge since many children often are absent from a classroom to attend a variety of other programs, from special education to accelerated classes to supportive services. Since the topic is one impacting the classroom community, attendance is important.

Do you have any suggestions to individualize The Sixth Sense II to a student and his/her classmates?

Imagining The Sixth Sense II as a finished garment, there are several "seams" along which alterations can be made to tailor the information to meet the needs of 1) the student with ASD, and 2) his/her classmates.

Needs of the student with ASD The expression of autism is unique in each student with the diagnosis. This dictates revisions in the information included in the lesson. First, understanding that social skills are not impaired in a "blanket fashion" in ASD, it's important for parents and professionals to consider the student's individual social profile when determining what to include. The child's social strengths can be mentioned along with the challenges. For example, Mr. Andrews' fourth graders are learning about their academically-talented classmate, Austin, and his social-communication challenges. In the course of the perceptual perspective-taking activity described on page 4, Mr. Andrews mentions that, like his classmates, Austin also has the ability to readily identify what others can see, or hear. Later, in the course of the affective perspective-taking task, Mr. Andrews indicates that *this* is where Austin often has the most difficulty.

Challenges in sensory processing are frequently a factor in autism, and sharing this information with classmates may be important to understanding some behaviors. *When* to share information about sensory challenges with classmates may not be as obvious at it first seems. For example, Mr. Andrews decides it's important to explain Austin's hyper-sensitivity to sound. Initially, it seems logical to mention this during the perceptual perspective-taking task (p. 4). Later Mr. Andrews changes his mind, electing to keep the focus on typical perspective-taking abilities at this early point in the lesson. Instead, Mr. Andrews elects to mention Austin's auditory sensitivity later in the lesson, after the focus turns from typical social cognition to Austin's challenges. Thus, Austin's hyper-sensitivity to school alarms and bells is mentioned as the students discuss how they can help Austin.

Needs of the classmates Custom fitting The Sixth Sense II to the student with ASD is the first step. Tailoring the lesson to the needs of the audience is the second. While The Sixth Sense II is applicable for students in second through sixth grade, there's a "social world of developmental difference" between the ages of seven and twelve, or eight and ten for that matter. Knowing the audience affirms their own daily social experiences and thus, captivates their interest.

A teacher knows the social developmental profile of his/her audience; The Sixth Sense II is the perfect opportunity to put that information to practical use. For example, if presenting The Sixth Sense II to an early elementary audience, a teacher will emphasize concepts and provide examples directly related to the experience of seven and eight year olds. At this age, a "friend" is someone who helps you, plays with you, is nice to you - observable acts and basic character traits are the defining factors. Therefore, the teacher can draw his/her examples of friendship from that second grade classroom: describing offers of assistance and acts of kindness. In contrast, it would be potentially confusing to encourage seven-year olds to "always be there" for one another, when their play interactions and relationships are often fleeting and undecided. Presenting social information that children recognize increases interest, affirms their own experience, and helps to set reasonable expectations for behavior.

My experience with The Sixth Sense over the years has resulted in many positive outcomes, along with a few results that were not expected. Sometimes, despite our careful planning to avoid pitfalls, efforts to individualize the plan to the needs of the student with ASD, and consideration of the developmental level of the audience, we're taken by surprise. After all, that's to be expected working with children. One unexpected outcome has occurred so frequently over the last nine years that I have decided it deserves mention.

At the completion of The Sixth Sense students are often dismissed to the playground or their next class. This is followed by a predictable scramble of chairs sliding back, desks opening and closing, books dropping, all which is accompanied by student conversation. The social dust clears and there - quietly standing motionless long past the student scatter - is one student pointing toward the board and saying, "Mrs. Gray, you described me, too."

In one instance in my nine years of experience with this lesson plan, that turned out to be the case. A child came forward at the close of The Sixth Sense II and later was formally diagnosed. More often, a formal diagnosis is not the outcome. What I believe happens is this: the social challenge I describe is recognized by children who for one reason or another - but certainly not due to the autism spectrum - are lonely, and struggle to establish friendships. As The Sixth Sense for most students increases understanding of peers with ASD, for a few the lesson holds up a most unexpected mirror.

Children who recognize themselves in the course of this lesson, deserve our attention and concern. It's important to ensure they are put in contact with educational staff that can determine the severity of their social challenge and provide assistance and support if it is indicated. At Jenison Public Schools, that would be the child's general education teacher, school counselor, principal, parents, and/or the resources in special education. The point is to be aware that some students may recognize aspects of their own experience in the description of the social sense.

Should the child with the ASD be present when The Sixth Sense is implemented in his class?

In my experience, I have seen the lesson plan completed successfully both ways – with the student present, and with the student engaged in an activity in another location. The answer to this question is influenced by many factors, including the age of the student, the personality of the student (and the class), the student's level of social awareness, and the desires of the parents. These factors should be discussed among parents, professionals, and in many cases the student prior to implementation. The decision ultimately rests with the parents and their student.

In your opinion, who best implements The Sixth Sense?

Over the last seven years, I have been aware of many adults leading The Sixth Sense, representing roles from parent to psychologist to teacher. As a result, I have developed a theory: The person best suited to implement The Sixth Sense, especially when the long term impact is considered, is the *general education* teacher. By leading the activity, the general education teacher demonstrates that he/she understands and values the information. In contrast, a "guest speaker" conducting The Sixth Sense may be unknown to the students, and more importantly, disappear at its conclusion. In this case, the information originates from – and returns to – a location other than the classroom. In addition, a guest speaker has little knowledge of the "classroom personality", or the individual factors of each of its members. For this reason, care has been taken in The Sixth Sense II is designed to be easy to understand and implement, with additional information that general education professionals need.

Sometimes, the general education teacher feels more comfortable if another person with expertise in autistic spectrum disorders implements The Sixth Sense. This can still be effective, with a few words of caution. If a "guest speaker" is used, it's important for the teacher to be a present and active participant throughout the lesson, and a leader in a short discussion regarding what has been learned, and what it means to the class as a whole. Sometimes, the school principal also attends and learns along with the students. His/her presence can 1) underscore the importance of the activity and 2) reinforce the expectation that students will apply the information in all school-related contexts.

The Sixth Sense II is appropriate for use with students ages 7-12. There is still a need for similar programs for early childhood and secondary students. Do you have any suggestions related to sharing these concepts with other students? Is there a Sixth Sense Junior or Senior?

Currently, a trip to the book store can make The Sixth Sense II concepts available to other audiences. For very young audiences, there are wonderful newly released children's books that foster self-esteem, mutual respect, and positive conflict resolution with younger audiences. A careful search for children's books that share accurate social information is likely to be more productive now than compared to even a few short years ago. Some of these books also have accompanying brief, inexpensive parent/teacher guides that outline supplemental activities. In this way, each book introduces an important social concept(s) that is readily applied to the child's own experience. Many of these resources are available from Free Spirit Publishing. For more information, see Appendix B: Related Resources/Young Children.

I recently discovered *Knowing Me, Knowing You* (Espeland, 2001) a new resource for students ages 12-18 to increase awareness of individual personalities and strategies for working effectively with others. Many of the concepts in this book are "advanced shadows" of The Sixth Sense II. The book is creatively developed with an instrument for students to use to determine their "preferred social response style". For a full reference and more information see Appendix B: Related Resources/Secondary Students.

After The Sixth Sense activity is completed, is that it? Or, are there other activities/strategies that reinforce these concepts throughout the year?

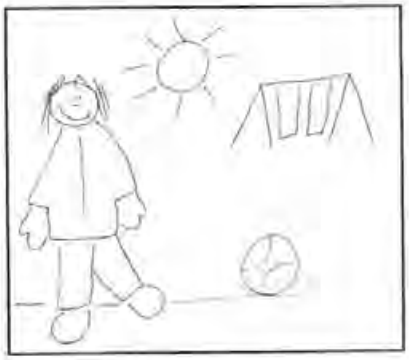
Many of the concepts in The Sixth Sense are important to a positive and supportive classroom community for *all* students, not just the included classmate. Just as Social Stories are "right at home" alongside a variety of instructional strategies used to educate children with ASD, so too will The Sixth Sense complement all of the efforts of parents and professionals to build socially comfortable classroom environments. There is a wide variety of materials and resources available to professionals that promote a positive classroom climate. One activity/resource we've developed to assist in this area is *The Classroom Catalog.*

The Classroom Catalog could be considered a "social registry" of all of the students in a classroom. A typical child observes, listens, and gradually learns about the children in their classroom; their preferred activities, likes and dislikes, weaknesses and strengths. For a variety of reasons, a child with ASD has difficulty accessing this information - information that is so readily apparent to their classmates. This makes it difficult if not impossible to identify a good potential playmate. While independent access to information about the child in the second row, third seat, may be a challenge for a child with ASD, s/he may be able to understand and use the information if it is presented in a meaningful format. This provides the rationale for a creating a "catalog" of children as a social reference, a "Who's Who at Recess".

In addition to providing information for the child with ASD, the Classroom Catalog is likely to be helpful for *all* students. Similar to *Student of the Week* bulletin boards, students share information about

My name is Angela Griffin. I am 8 years old.
My birthday is every year on March 5. This year, my birthday falls on a Tuesday.

This is a photograph of me.



This is a picture I drew of myself on the playground. I like to play ball on the playground.

I am an important member of my class. In my class, students help one another succeed. One subject that I really enjoy is science. A subject that is usually easy for me is math. A subject that I would be willing to help others with is math or science. Others in my class may be able to help me with my difficult subjects.

I asked my parent /caregiver to tell me one word that describes my personality. It is happy.
After school or on the weekend, one thing I really like to do is play outside.
One book or story that I really like is Charlotte's Web.
In my opinion, the best movie / television show is The Lion King.
(Choose one) I have a pet. It is a Cat. My pet's name is Cinders.
I do not have a pet. Someday, I might like to have a _____ for a pet.
When I grow up, I would like to be a doctor or scientist.
One thing I would like others to know about me is that I can sew!

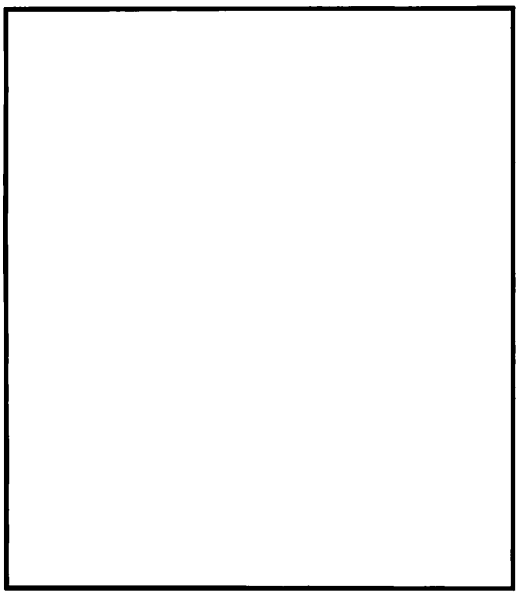
themselves with their classmates in a resource that is available all year. The catalog provides *all* students with information that may otherwise go undetected, *and an opening* to initiate contact with students with similar interests. For example, a new student moves in over the summer and is approached by a classmate, "I saw in the Classroom Catalog that you played soccer at your school in Texas before you moved...want to play soccer with us today?" In addition, listing academic strengths is great for self esteem, and emphasizes the role all students can play assisting others. If Jamie is terrific at writing poetry, she can list herself as someone willing to help others in that area, while using the catalog herself to choose someone who may help her raise her grade in mathematics.

The information included in the *Classroom Catalog is at the discretion of the teacher, and possibly the students. A teacher may design the page *or* use class discussion to determine what information to include. Pages may be completed in class or at home to include parents in the project. Completed pages are inserted into plastic sleeves to ensure durability and assembled into a notebook with a clear plastic cover. To bring renewed attention to the catalog and its uses throughout the year: 1) students may take turns creating a new cover for the catalog once a week; 2) teachers may use it to randomly select students for special tasks or to provide answers, placing a small sticky note tab on each page to indicate which students have been selected; or 3) visitors to the classroom may be handed the catalog to introduce the students (parent permission may be advisable).

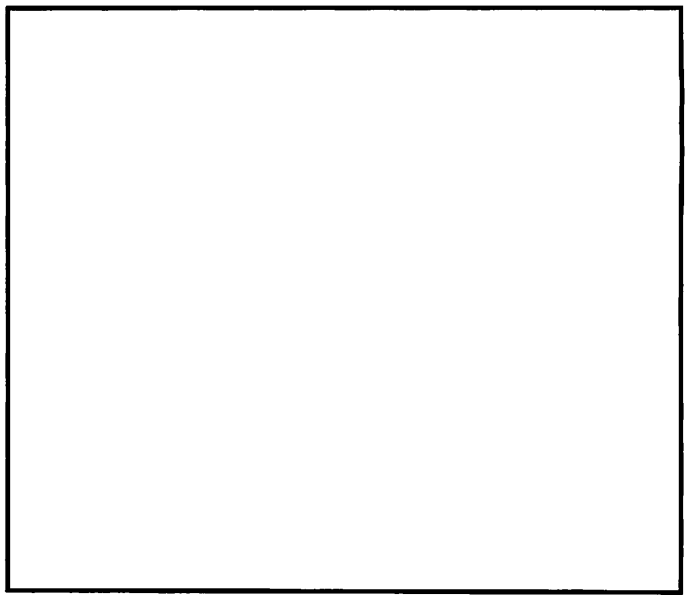
**A blank version of the sample Classmate Catalog form (above) is available on the following page. Restricted permission to copy this form is granted for non-profit group and classroom use.*

My name is _____. I am _____ years old.

My birthday is every year on_____. This year, my birthday falls on a _____.



This is a photograph of me.



This is a picture I drew of myself on the playground. I like to _____ on the playground.

I am an important member of my class. In my class, students help one another succeed. One subject that I really enjoy is _____. A subject that is usually easy for me is _____. A subject that I would be willing to help others with is _____. Others in my class may be able to help me with my difficult subjects.

I asked my parent /caregiver to tell me one word that describes my personality. It is _____.

After school or on the weekend, one thing I really like to do is_____.

One book or story that I really like is _____.

In my opinion, the best movie / television show is _____.

(Choose one) I have a pet. It is a _____. My pet's name is _____.

I do not have a pet. Someday, I might like to have a _____ for a pet.

When I grow up, I would like to be a _____.

One thing I would like others to know about me is _____.

APPENDIX B: Related Resources

The resources listed in this appendix are representative of books for children that teach the value of human differences, the challenge facing children with special needs, the feelings of those excluded from social alliances, and the value of acceptance and peaceful conflict resolution. These resources may be used to reinforce, expand, and review concepts that are central to The Sixth Sense II. They are listed alphabetically by the author's last name. In the descriptions of these resources italicized font indicates the title(s) of additional resources found in the book, or selected passages of text. Resources that present similar concepts for age groups outside the range of The Sixth Sense II (early childhood ages 3-6 and secondary students age 12-18) are listed in separate sections at the conclusion of this appendix.

Edwards, A. (2001) Taking Autism to School. Plainview, NY: JayJo Books. Ages 5-10. 28 pages with color illustrations. Contains an autism quiz, *Ten Tips for Teachers,* and a list of *Additional Resources.*

- Angel introduces her friend, Sam, to the reader. Sam has autism. Concepts covered in the book include a description of behaviors and reasons why they occur, learning style and commonly used supports (for example, a picture schedule), as well as how Sam is similar to other children. *Many doctors and other important people are learning new things about autism every day. Our class is learning more about autism too. The more we learn, the better we can understand Sam and his feelings. Understanding is what being friends is all about. I'm glad Sam is my friend. I hope Sam can be your friend too!* (p. 21)

Faherty, C. (2000) What Does It Mean To Me? Arlington, TX: Future Horizons. Suggest middle childhood to adolescence. 300 pages with black and white illustrations. Includes a preface for parents and professionals.

- A step-by-step, easy to follow and reader friendly road to self discovery for youth with autistic spectrum disorders. Using an interactive workbook format with opportunities for sentence completion by the reader, this resource is an invaluable tool that results in a comprehensive book about "me". Topics include but are not limited to: sensory issues, communication, home, school, people, friends, and feelings. Parents and professionals will discover that they also learn much that they did not know about their student!

Gainer, C. (1998) I'm Like You, You're Like Me: A Child's Book About Understanding and Celebrating Each Other! Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. Ages 3-8. 41 pages with color illustrations. Leader's Guide also available. One book from a series with related topics.

- A book for young children about human variation. Beginning with physical similarities and differences, the text and illustrations gradually proceed to more advanced/abstract topics, like feelings. *I feel accepted when you invite me to your home to play. Or when you want to be my buddy as we line up for playground time. I feel accepted when you say I'm your friend.* (p. 20).

Galvin, M. (2001) Otto Learns About His Medicine: A Story About Medication for Children with ADHD. Washington, D.C: Magination Press / American Psychological Association. Ages 4-8. 32 pages with color illustrations. Contains a concluding *Note to Parents for the Third Edition.*

- Using cars as an analogy, the author describes the difficulty that Otto, a young car, has paying attention at home and school. Otto's parents, teacher, and physician work together as a "pit crew" to help Otto. He learns new strategies to keep organized, and receives medication from the doctor. *He also asked if he could look under Otto's hood. He checked the oil. He checked the headlights. He checked everything. Dr. Beemer said, "Otto, I think Dr. Wheeler is right. There is a medicine that may help you." This medicine would help Otto keep still long enough to pay attention long enough to learn what he needed to know* (p. 20).

Gehret, J. (1996) The Don't-give-up Kid and Learning Differences. Fairport, N.Y: Verbal Images Press. 34 pages with black and white illustrations. Contains a *Parent Resource Guide* and a *Bibliography For Talking to Kids About LD.*

- This is the story about Alex, a child with a learning disability. Alex feels defeated in his struggle to learn to read, until he is introduced to Mrs. Baxter who provides an environment and strategies that help Alex learn to read: *"Then she told me a story about Thomas Edison, the inventor. One of his inventions took 10,000 tries before it would work. One day he was asked, "How does it feel to have failed 10,000 times?" "I didn't fail 10,000 times," Mr. Edison answered. "I succeeded at finding 10,000 ways that didn't work." After many more tries, his invention was a big success. If I want to be like Mr. Edison, I have to keep trying too.* (pp 14-15).

Gray, C. (1996) Pictures of Me. Jenison, MI: Jenison Public Schools. Contact: Karen Lind, Jenison High School, 2140 Bauer Road, Jenison, MI. 49428. (616) 457-8955. Email: gcenter@gateway.net

- *Pictures of Me* is a Social Story that guides the process of sharing a diagnosis on the autism spectrum with a child. Parents, selected professionals, and the child complete a series of lists that introduce the child to his/her personality, talents, and diagnosis. In addition, everyone draws a picture of the child that emphasizes his/her strengths and positive assets. The Story closes with a description of the people who can help as the child continues to grow and gather information.

Lalli, J. (1997) I Like Being Me: Poems for Children About Feeling Special, Appreciating Others, and Getting Along. Minneapolis: MN: Free Spirit Publishing. 53 pages with black and white photographs. Suggested ages preschool through early elementary.

- What a fun book for children! Topics addressed via short, simple poems include: making choices, feelings, self-esteem, honesty, cooperation, sharing, manners, repairing a social error, and appreciating the perspectives of others. Though some of the concepts may be too difficult for very young children, the short, entertaining text and many developmentally appropriate topics make it a great resource for a wide audience. A sample poem titled, *Someone Else's Chair* reads: *Want to learn about each other? Want to show how much you care? Just imagine what's it's like, To sit in someone else's chair* (p. 28).

Mitchell, L. (1999) Different Just Like Me. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing. 28 pages. Color illustrations. Suggest preschool and early elementary grades. Awards: *Kid's Pick of the Lists* (ABA), Spring, 1999; *Early Childhood News Director's Choice Award,* 2000; *Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People,* 2000.

- In one week April will be visiting her grandmother. On each day of the week prior to the visit, April encounters someone who is different, just like her. On these pages, only the people in the illustrations are depicted in full color, the rest is black and white. This draws attention to the characters and their physical or personal differences, while the text notes the similarities between April and the characters. For example, an illustration of a woman in a wheelchair handing a paper towel to April, is accompanied by this text: *Before we left, I went to the rest room. While I was standing at the sink, a lady came out of the biggest stall and washed her hands. I smiled, and she said hello. She handed me a paper towel and then dried her hands, just like me.* (p. 13)

Murkoff, H. (2001) What to Expect at a Play Date. U.S.A: Harper Collins Publishers. 22 pages with color illustrations. Suggest preschool through early elementary. Includes *A Word to Parents* guide.

- This book uses a question and answer format to share basic step-by-step information about a play date. The information and format is likely to be very helpful to children with autistic spectrum disorders. Topics include: *What's a play date? Who will be at the play date? Who will I see at the play date? What will I do at the play date? Why do I have to share my toys? What if my friend doesn't share? What if my friend and I do not want to do the same thing? and When will the play date be over?* (selected titles quoted from text).

Polland, B. K. (2000) We Can Work it Out: Conflict Resolution for Children. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press. 63 pages with color photographs. Suggest elementary. Includes a preface for parents and professionals.

- This book can serve as a guide to discussions with children about conflicts and their effective resolution. Topics include: kindness, compliments, criticism, taking responsibility, exclusion and inclusion, honesty, friendship, jealousy, and acceptance. The social concepts that are introduced would be applicable throughout the elementary grades, despite the initial impression that the book may give as an early elementary resource.

Roca, N. & Curto, R.M. (2001) Friendship, from your old friends to your new friends. English version published by Barron's Educational Series, Inc: New York. Original title in Catalan: L'Amistat, dels amics d'abans als amics d'ara, published by Gemser Publications: Barcelona, Spain (2000). 35 pages. Color illustrations. Includes *Activities,* a section that describes several games to play with friends, and *Guidelines for Parents.*

- This is the story of John, who has recently moved and finds himself "between friends". The book emphasizes the value of former friendships, and the feelings of loss associated with moving. John spends some time playing alone, eventually venturing out to make new social connections. Along the way, the text identifies several social issues in childhood: personality differences among friends; "best" friends; peer conflict; apologies; exclusion; loneliness; maintaining old friendships; the steps to form new social contacts, and jealousy. John makes a new friend, Mark, who has several other friends: *Mark has a lot of friends in this neighborhood, so he always has someone to play with. Sometimes John is a little jealous because he wishes he didn't have to share his friend with anybody else...* " (p. 22). Considering most children will recognize John's temporary social predicament, this book could lay the groundwork for The Sixth Sense II, and the discussion of a peer whose social isolation may be more severe or long lasting.

Rubin, K. H. (2002) The Friendship Factor. New York, NY: Viking Press. A resource for parents and professionals. 322 pages.

- This book is a research-based guide to the development of social relationships in childhood and adolescence and the multi-faceted role they play in a child's development, with practical advice for parents and professionals. From the inside front cover: *Dr. Kenneth Rubin has discovered that our children's abilities to navigate their social worlds shape all aspects of their emotional and intellectual growth. ...Dr. Rubin has also discovered that the ability to connect socially is something children learn and can develop over time.* For parents and professionals working on behalf of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), Dr. Rubin's work is a valuable resource that accurately describes the social landscape of childhood and its interaction with a child's personality and inherited disposition. Perhaps more importantly, Rubin's book will remind those working on behalf of children with ASD that a child with ASD is *first* a child with a unique personality. To those who reflect thoughtfully between the lines, Rubin's book raises interesting new questions for those of us working on behalf of children with ASD, potentially opening new doors for the development of social curricula.

Sheindlin, J. (2001) You Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover: Cool Rules for School. USA: Cliff Street Books / Harper Collins Publishers. Ages 7-12. 94 pages with black and white illustrations.

- Judge Judy Sheindlin opens this book with a note *To the Kids: Adults seem to have little sayings for everything. But what do they really mean? They sound very interesting, but how do you use them in your everyday life to solve problems and make the right choices* (p. 1). Using a format that presents children with problem situations with four possible answers, Judge Judy explains the meaning of several phrases. Children learn important life lessons at the same time, among them concepts directly related to The Sixth Sense II.

Twachtman-Cullen, D. (1998) Trevor Trevor. Cromwell, CT: Starfish Press. Suggest early elementary grades. 41 pages and a preface, with color illustrations and "paper doll" Trevor.

- This is the story of Trevor, a boy with autism included in a second grade classroom. Many of the students do not understand some of Trevor's behaviors, as demonstrated by some of their responses to him. In a puzzle competition with another school, Trevor's talents cause his classmates to view him in a new light. *Mrs. Grayley looked at the faces of her students, and for the very first time, she saw admiration for the little boy they had teased so often. She now knew that her Puzzlemania idea had been a good one, after all* (p. 37).

Walker, A. (1991) Finding the Green Stone. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, & Co. Suggest early to middle elementary grades. 34 pages with color paintings by Catherine Deeter.

- This children's book with beautiful illustrations can serve as the impetus for activities stressing the importance of a positive classroom community. In a town where everyone has a glowing green stone, Johnny's mean spirited behavior causes him to lose his green stone. His family and friends help Johnny search for his missing green stone, until Johnny discovers he must find it on his own in his heart. A teacher can translate the concepts into practical application within the classroom, for example, dropping a green stone (marble) in a glass jar whenever acts of kindness or assistance are observed.

Early Childhood

Recognizing that The Sixth Sense II is too advanced and lengthy for very young audiences, the following resources may be used to teach similar concepts to children ages 3-7. The books in this list cover topics ranging from how people are similar and unique, self awareness and self esteem, basic feelings, acceptance, making choices, and repairing social mistakes. Many of the books contain notes to parents and professionals, and a few have separate teacher's guides that list a variety of related activities. Collectively, these books represent the growing number of wonderful resources available to build the earliest – and most basic - social studies units. (The reader is also encouraged to review the books listed on pages 17-19 for other possible titles.)

Gainer, C. (1998) I'm Like You, You're Like Me: A Child's Book About Understanding and Celebrating Each Other! Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. Ages 3-8. 41 pages with color illustrations. Leader's Guide also available. One book from a series with related topics.

- A book for young children about human variation. Beginning with physical similarities and differences, the text and illustrations gradually proceed to more advanced/abstract topics, like feelings. *I feel accepted when you invite me to your home to play. Or when you want to be my buddy as we line up for playground time. I feel accepted when you say I'm your friend.* (p. 20).

Grobel Intrater, R. (2000) Two Eyes, A Nose, and a Mouth. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc. Suggest early childhood. 26 pages with large full color photographs of many varied faces.

- A very basic look at the variety of faces in the world, with wonderful close up photographs of the differences and similarities described in the text. The author uses a rhymical and rhyming format, with a few sentences a page. A nice introduction to how each person is unique, and how that makes the world very interesting. *Some eyes are shaped liked almonds. Others are big and round. And what about the eyebrows? Why all kinds can be found* (pp 5-8).

Hofbauer, M. P. (2000) Couldn't We Make a Difference? Hong Kong: Greene Bark Press. Ages 3-8. 28 pages with color illustrations.

- A story about social acceptance with simple, engaging rhyming text and clear illustrations. The book positively presents a variety of topics, including: taking another's perspective, human

differences, conflict resolution, cooperation, and helping others. *Then, couldn't we help each other, to walk or climb or stand? I could give you a leg up, You could give me a hand.* (p. 19).

Payne, L. M. (1997) We Can Get Along: A Child's Book of Choices. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. Preschool-early elementary. 30 pages with color illustrations. Leader's Guide also available.

- A basic book about making social choices and conflict resolution. The book opens with descriptions of negative interactions and the resulting feelings, proceeding to suggestions or more positive responses. The description of friendship may be more developmentally suited for students who are much older. The text may be confusing for students with autistic spectrum disorders.

Payne, L. M. (1994) Just Because I Am: A Child's Book of Affirmation. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. Preschool-early elementary. 26 pages with color illustrations. Leader's Guide also available.

- This book is a very basic introduction to several self awareness and social concepts, including: body awareness, feelings, safety, self-esteem, making social mistakes, and making decisions. *I am myself. I am special and unique. My body is a part of me. My feelings are a part of me. My thoughts are a part of me. My needs are a part of me. All of these things make up a special person... Me* (p. 25-26).

Rogers, F. (2000) Let's Talk About It: Extraordinary Friends. New York, N.Y: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers. Estimated ages 3-7. 30 pages with color photographs.

- This book covers several concepts related to social understanding and peer acceptance with an accurate, straight forward and practical approach. It is creatively organized. For example, the children who served as models for the photographs are introduced on the first page. *Sometimes it can be hard to remember how much people are alike, especially when you meet someone who doesn't walk or talk or learn the same way you do. You might be curious. Sometimes you might have questions... and other times you might not* (pp. 6-7).

Secondary Students

Espeland, P. (2001) Knowing Me, Knowing You: The I-Sight Way to Understand Yourself and Others. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing and Inscape Publishing, Inc. Ages 12-18. 110 pages. Contains *I-Sight*, "the *Personal Profile System* (Minneapolis, MN: Inscape Publishing) developed for ages 12-18, and "customized for teens with new research that ensure its validity and reliability" (back cover). Includes permission to copy the instrument and related activities for group use.

- This book is creatively organized to guide teens through the rationale and application of the *I-Sight instrument.* This instrument provides teens with insight into how they frequently respond to people and social situations, then identifies "things to look out for" to successfully interact with others. With modification and clarification of abstract terms, this instrument may be useful for teens with autistic spectrum disorders. Especially interesting is the emphasis on increasing awareness of how others may interpret and respond to each personality type; and the learning of "flex behaviors" to minimize conflicts and maximize social success. *Knowing Me, Knowing You* goes beyond I-Sight to offer practical suggestions for making it part of your life.

The Sixth Sense II ...and You

We'd like your informal feedback regarding your experiences using the information contained in this booklet. Your ideas will be valuable to us as we continue to revise these materials and gather new information. Feel free to copy this form to keep your booklet intact. You are welcome to write on the back or use additional sheets of paper. Send your completed form to the address on the inside front cover. To express our appreciation for your time and input, we'll send you a complimentary copy of The Best of THE MORNING NEWS (winter 1999 issue). That is why we have asked for your name and address at the bottom of the page. If you do not wish to receive our thank you gift, you may elect to remain anonymous. Thank you in advance for your assistance..

Please indicate whether you are a parent, or your role as a professional: _____

Indicate with a check √ the resources you used in this booklet:

_____1. The Sixth Sense II lesson plan

_____2. Appendix A

_____3. Appendix B

Please indicate the resource listed above that you found the most helpful:_____

Please briefly describe the age of the students you are involved with and your experience using the information in this booklet: _____

_____

_____

_____

What are your ideas to improve The Sixth Sense II? _____

_____

_____

_____

If you are aware of other resources that may be listed and reviewed in Appendix B, please list the title and author:

1. _____ 3. _____

2. _____ 4. _____

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