ASD NEST PROGRAM
SDI GUIDEPOSTS
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MODEL

SDI Guideposts for Social Development Across the School Day

This is a list of social development focus areas for the students in the ASD Nest Program. Strategies outlined here are designed to be incorporated in the classroom, the therapy rooms, into instructional lunch and when possible into cluster times. By understanding and addressing these social deficits, we are supporting our students' full participation in their school environment. These strategies serve to reduce interfering behaviors, giving each child greater access to the curriculum. When targeting social deficits, we also are consistent in providing positive behavioral supports.

Sections

The Basics **Page 1**

Experience Sharing **Page 2**	Language & Dynamic Communication **Page 2**	Problem Solving **Page 3**	Social Cognition **Page 3**	Flexibility **Page 4**	Incorporating Strengths & Interests **Page 4**

SDI Basics
General structure, staff configuration, SDI in case conferences

- **Players:** SLP and classroom teachers, OT when possible
- Led by the SLP and *planned in collaboration* with relevant staff
- There should be at least one less adult than children actively involved in focus time and no more than three adults. Other adults should rotate: note taking, video taping, special support
- **Note taking** includes observations and data collection. For example: each student's goals should be at the top of the notes. The focus can be on a single child to monitor and record progress across goals, OR one goal area can be considered in relation to all '4' students. Who and how should be determined at planning sessions and observations should be used in case conferences and for planning.
- **Feedback and Reflection** should frame each session.
- Hand-raising in social development time is **not** necessary and unnatural.

- Students and adults sit together in a circle on the floor or around a table. *Remember we are modeling and encouraging social interaction so set up should be as naturalistic as possible.*
- **GPSs** should be at every case conference. Social development should be discussed for every child that is conferenced.
- **SDI Units** should be read and discussed as a team. Incorporation of unit concepts should be considered at all planning sessions.
- **The Team Planning Map** is a tool for planning at the start of each unit. All team members use this tool to incorporate unit concepts into relevant times of the day.
- **Social Stories™**[*], **Comic Stripping**[*], **Role-play** and **Power Cards**[†] all support social development and should be incorporated into focus time.
- **Sensory diets** should be understood by all staff and incorporated into focus time.

[*] Carol Gray; [†] Elisa Gagnon

Experience Sharing

The classroom is a dynamic system where one must adapt to others throughout the day. SDI moves beyond the teaching of instrumental or social skills to promote true engagement and interaction. This encourages the student to function in dynamic learning exchanges and social interactions where information is new and the gathering and sharing of information is essential.

- **Celebrate** and highlight successes to help build the motivation to interact.

> **Oh geez! Is this another one of those *blink-blink* moments?**

Labeling the moment concretizes memories of experiences, supporting students' episodic memory

- **Label a moment** or an experience and refer back to it.

- Build **anticipation** into activities.

- Use **declarative language** to promote novel comments and engagement.

- Help to **encode memories**: discuss, retell stories, take pictures/video and revisit.

Create opportunities for experience sharing and support it when it happens naturally

- Highlight '**we-ness**' and/or **teamwork**.

- Build **productive uncertainty**[*] into the day (remember that rules prevent referencing and problem solving).

- Note when child/children are '**a part of the group**[†].'

Language and Dynamic Communication

Language—how we comprehend it, how we use it to express ourselves, how we understand the hidden rules and take others' perspective—is interwoven into Social Development. An awareness of pragmatic language weaknesses, as well as the educator's own use of language, greatly strengthens this intervention and our students' success in the school environment.

- **Steps of directions:** be aware of the number of directions that each student is able to follow. The SLP will assess this at the beginning of the year and monitor progress.

> It was so much fun playing trading places!

> I wonder what Evan did over the weekend.

> I really like using the white crayon.

Some examples of declarative language

- Use **declarative language** to promote novel thinking, commenting, and to reduce the pressure of question bombardment.

- Use the '**45 second rule**'[*] to provide time for the student to process language.

- Use **self-talk:** be clear, simple and impeccable with your words. This is a way to model how we think through sequences and problem-solve.

- **Decrease direct prompts** and replace with indirect prompts (declarative statement, facial cues to demonstrate expectation) when appropriate.

- Use **non-verbal language** and facial expressions to promote referencing and engagement (true social communication). *Remember when exaggerating the non-verbal, you slowly fade this as a cue/prompt once referencing and attending become integrated in the student's social lexicon.*

- **Eliminate the demand for eye contact**.

- Understand each student's **wh-question comprehension**. Model how we respond to wh-questions throughout the day. SLP will assess in September.

- *Be aware of language used in **Social Stories**™. Consult with the SLP to confirm that language is at each student's receptive ability level.*

Problem Solving

Problem solving demands novel and dynamic thinking, flexibility and awareness that there may be multiple solutions to any problem. Both academic problem solving and social problem solving are necessary throughout the school day. An overall positive spin on problem solving demystifies the process, encourages it as a challenge and makes the goal of problem solving seem obtainable.

- **Highlight problems** when they arise.
- Brainstorm **multiple solutions**.
- **Self-talk: verbally model your problem solving thinking** process. Again, be clear, simple and impeccable with your words.
- Discuss the **size of a problem**[*] (refer to the five-point scale[†] for problems).

5		**DISASTER**	*Sample five-point problem scale*
4		**BIG Problem**	*Teachers individualize five-point scales for students and groups*
3		Medium problem	
2		Little problem	
1		glitch	

- **Create opportunities** to problem solve individually and as teams.
- **Evaluate solutions**: go back to previous solutions and discuss how successful they were or weren't and why.
- *Focus on the **process**, not just the product.*
- **Use sequencing charts** to visually guide a child through the steps (parts) of the problem and it's solutions (whole). Literature is already visual and is a good way to discuss a problem, what happened and how the problem was solved.

Hello my name is **director**
Hello my name is **set designer**
Hello my name is **videographer**

Assigning roles for group activities supports problem solving

- **Assign roles** for group problem solving.
- **Encourage** taking chances and making 'smart guesses.'

Social Cognition

Social Cognition or Social Thinking® refers to the ability to think about the social world: to take the perspective of another and consider this perspective in a dynamic social exchange. It allows the student with ASD to use a strength (thinking) to help them with a challenge (social rules). For K-2 we primarily model and encourage social thinking through the use of vocabulary, and model and highlight situations that require us to think about others. Literature is a great way to model these concepts. You can incorporate social concepts into character and story discussions. For students in grades 3 and up who are cognitively ready, we teach social thinking more directly.

- Identify when students or teachers do something that shows they are **thinking about someone else** or the group.
- Discuss **expected and unexpected behaviors©**[*].
- **Just-me kid** vs. a **thinking-about-you kid©**[*]
- Encourage '**whole body listening**'[*] and remind students that, "That tells me that you are thinking about me."
- Discuss **preferences**: *likes and dislikes* (and that it is okay to have differences).
- Highlight when a pair or group is **sharing thinking** ("making connections").

Students and teachers share thinking in the classroom

- Work in **teams** and provide **roles**: this encourages thinking about others to accomplish a task.
- Address dealing with '**boring moments**'©[*] (for developmentally older students).
- Find **social clues**[*].
- Use **Comic Strip Conversations**[‡] to explore social concepts.
- Be a **Social Detective**[*] (3rd grade and up)
- Explore the **hidden curriculum**[§] (3rd grade and up)

<u>Words of caution</u>:
We don't require that a child be a 'thinking about you kid'—instead we note when they are thinking about someone else. Children can and do choose to be 'just me kids.' We simply want them to be aware of their choices.

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[*] M. G. Winner/Social Thinking; [†] K. Dunn-Buron & M. Curtis; [‡] C. Gray; [§] B. S. Myles et al

Flexibility

If you have worked with children on the Spectrum, for even a day, it is highly likely that you have witnessed a lack of flexibility in the air. The student with ASD can be very rigid and inflexible, leading to difficulties solving problems, relating to others and thinking socially. We begin the flexibility/self-regulation program Superflex® by 3rd grade. We can, however, incorporate the idea of flexibility into our younger students' days by modeling, using basic flexibility vocabulary and highlighting.

- Once routines are established, **add variations**.

🕚 11:30	Lunch/Recess 🧺👦👧
🕛 12:15	Surprise! ❓
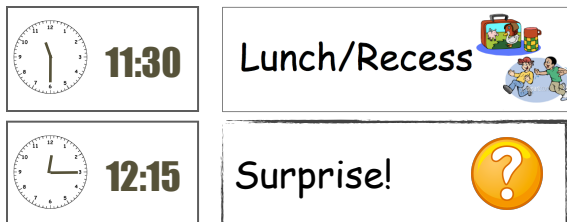
Incorporating flexibility into the classroom schedule

- **Set up partnerships** that require collaboration to accomplish the task.

- Once students are comfortable in roles, **switch roles** and highlight everyone's different strengths. This encourages flexibility and helps us to recognize differences.

- Use the '**good enough rule***.'

- Discuss and encourage **multiple solutions** to problems.

- **Change the endings** to stories.

- Use familiar materials for a different purposes.
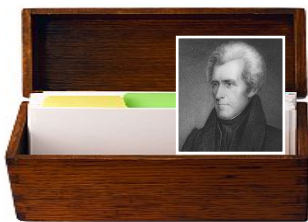
Encourage students to "use their people file"© when thinking about characters in novels or historical figures--for example, considering what they know about Andrew Jackson's past that may inform his decisions as president

- Use social vocabulary **in a variety of contexts**.

- **Highlight** when **flexible thinking** is used and encourage new and more flexible solutions to problems.

- **Tailor Superflex®† vocabulary to individual students** to encourage flexible thinking (3rd grade and up.)

Incorporating Strengths & Interests

*When focusing on weaknesses to determine social deficits, it is important to remember that these high-functioning children generally have many **strengths**. Rather that not allowing the presence of preferred interests in the classroom, (after all we cannot make them stop **thinking**), we capitalize on these areas and help to organize these interests into a student's thinking.*

- When an interest is interfering with group work, we can acknowledge a student's need and problem solve a solution:

  ‣ Use a **parking lot** to write down the interest, which can be discussed at a planned time later in the session.

  ‣ Use a **thoughts-notebook** so the student can write down their thoughts either whenever they need to, or at a planned time later in the session.

  ‣ Provide a '**thought time**' in the day where the student can think about whatever interests he/she wants to think about.

  ‣ *These are not supports that should be earned or taken away. This is a support strategy to help a student focus. Taking away the support would be counterproductive.*

- When taking on a role, **match students' interests to roles**.

- Balance the discussion on **strengths** with an understanding of **similarities and differences**.

- **Teach through a preferred interest.**

- Draw on the strength of their interest with **Power Cards**.

Lightning McQueen knows that it's not always important to be first. He wants you to remember three things:

1. Not being first is OK.

2. If you come in first, you can:
- *Smile*
- *Say, "Yeah!" quietly*

3. If you come in second or later, you can:
- *Take a deep breath*
- *Say "Maybe another time" to yourself*

A sample Power Card, incorporating an individual student's interest

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Buron, K.D., & Curtis, M. (2003). The Incredible 5-Point Scale. Shawnee Mission KS: AAPC.

Gagnon, E. (2001). Power Cards: Using special interests to motivate children and youth with Asperger Syndrome and autism. Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC.

Gray, C. (2010). The New Social Story Book: Revised and expanded 10th anniversary edition. Arlington, Tx: Future Horizons.

Gray, C. (1994). Comic Strip Conversations: Colorful, illustrated interactions with students with autism and related disorders. Arlington, Tx: Future Horizons.

Gutstein, S., Gutstein, H., Baird, C. Eds. (2007). The Relationship Development Intervention Program and Education. Houston, Texas: Connections Center Publications.

Myles, B. S., Trautman, M. L., & Schelvan, R. L. (2004). The Hidden Curriculum: Practical Solutions for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations. Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC.

Winner, M. G. (2005) Think Social: A social thinking curriculum for school-age students. San Jose, CA: Michelle Garcia Winner Publishing.

* Steven Gutstein et al; † Michelle Garcia Winner/Social Thinking