Talking Matters

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Helping your child to reach their potential

Learning and ASD

Students with ASD often have uneven learning patterns.

 Be aware that:

• They may find abstract thinking challenging, yet often have good recall for facts.

• They are more comfortable with concrete activities and rote learning than with creative activities, such as experimenting, predicting and estimating.

• They may find whole word approaches to spelling preferable to invented spelling. As visual learners, phonics can often be difficult also.

• They find writing recounts and procedures easier than story writing.

• They often read aloud fluently but have difficulty comprehending what they read.

The following may be helpful:

o Be aware of the child's strengths and weaknesses and allow success through strengths and support for weaker areas.

o Providing a concrete model, visual cues and opportunities for repetition and practice are helpful.

o Once skills are developed opportunities to practice skills in different ways and settings are important as transferring skills can be difficult.

Students with ASD are often reluctant to produce written work. The following may be helpful:

• Be very clear and specific about what is required.

• Incorporate interests whenever possible.

• Break the task into small, specific and achievable steps.

• Use a checklist to help with organising materials and moving through the stages of writing.

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- Avoid beginning with a blank page. Provide planners, story maps, sentence starters.

- Help the student with the brainstorming and planning stages. Provide visuals at this stage such as symbols or word lists for vocabulary, sequence pictures for story lines.

- Provide concrete rewards for completing steps i.e. write three sentences then get a stamp or token. When a number of tokens or stamps are collected they can be exchanged for a concrete reward such a few minutes of computer time.

- Computer programs are often motivating. Typing and presenting work illustrated with clip art is often more motivating than writing and allows a well presented final product when the student's expectations do not match their motor skills.

   Rewards help students learn about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Students with ASD do not always respond to social rewards such as praise in the way that other students do. They may need concrete rewards around their areas of interest. Gradually the frequency of rewards can be reduced.