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Making a Difference for Students with Differences: Bullying and Disability

“Fully 94% of the mothers reported that peers had victimized their child [with Asperger’s syndrome or a nonverbal learning disorder] in some fashion within the past year.”

2002 study done in the US¹

“I only secretly dream . . . for love and to have friends that see the real me and that only want to be nice to each person in the world no matter how difficult or how they struggle in life . . . or what they look like in physical appearance”

David, a teenager with ASD (autism)²

Who are students with differences?

- Disabilities and Differences
- IEP’s, or maybe not
- Separate classroom vs. general ed. classrooms



Hidden: Social or cognitive disability may not be readily apparent, OR Student’s negative behaviors might be attributable to his or her disability.

Visible: Readily apparent, as in a physical, speech, or cognitive disability

In either case, student may seem socially more high functioning than he/she actually is.

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May Be Visible	May Be Hidden
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Physical disabilities (CP, MD, etc.) ◆ Sensory-based disabilities (blindness, deafness) ◆ Cognitive Disabilities ◆ ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorders) ◆ Down's syndrome ◆ Facial and physical differences ◆ Speech/language (e.g., stuttering) <p>Also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spina bifida ● Insulin-dependent diabetes ● Obesity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Learning disabilities ◆ ADHD (with/without impulsivity) ◆ Asperger's syndrome and High-functioning Autism ◆ Nonverbal Learning Disability ◆ Emotional and Behavioral Disorders ◆ Sensory processing/modulation disorder <p>Also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Epilepsy ● Tourette's Syndrome

Bullying and Special Needs

◆ Disability Harassment

Related Government Agencies and Policies

- OCR (Office of Civil Rights)
Enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of ADA
(Americans with Disabilities Act)
www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/disabharassltr.html
www.ed.gov/print/about/offices/list/ocr/checklist.html
(harassment checklist)
- OSERS (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services)
Enforces IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), which ensures that
FAPE (Free and Appropriate Education) is provided to all eligible students (i.e.
those with disabilities)
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/index.html>
- HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration)
Part of the US Dept. of Health and Human Services. Offers **Stop Bullying Now**
resource kit, and “Bullying Among Children and Youth with Disabilities”
www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov
- NCSET (National Center for Special Education and Transition)
Issue Brief: “Bullying and Teasing of Youth with Disabilities: Creating Positive School
Environments for Effective Inclusion” www.ncset.org

◆ Additional Resources

- PACER Champions for Children with Disabilities: Provides training, advocacy and information for families of youth with disabilities.

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Includes National Center for Bullying Prevention, a very cool interactive website about bullying for kids with disabilities, and materials for educators (coloring book, poster, role plays, etc.).

www.pacer.org ; www.PACERKidsagainstbullying.org

- Special Needs Project: Online bookstore with disability-related items for educators, professionals, and parents. www.specialneeds.com
- The Gray Center: Carol Gray's website on autism for families, educators, and professionals includes many resources to address bullying in this population. www.thegraycenter.org
- Your Special Child: Website for parents authored by Julie Swanson, a disability advocate. Includes paper on bullying and disabilities. www.yourspecialchild.com
- Labeled Disabled: Maggie Doben's disability awareness and anti-discrimination program for elementary students. www.labeleddisabledfilm.com

◆ Notes



Bullying and Special Needs

◆ Factors that increase vulnerability to being a target

- Being different
- Social isolation
- Decreased social or coping skills
- Imbalance of power



◆ Disabilities

Cognitive

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Sensory Processing Disorder

Coordination Difficulty

ADHD

Learning Disabilities

Asperger's Syndrome/ASDHFA

Physical Disabilities

Bullying and Special Needs

Classroom Strategies

- ◆ School-wide climate of anti-aggression and tolerance of differences

- ◆ Disability education (with student's permission)

- ◆ Disability Awareness activities (e.g., read-alouds, book reports, plays, class discussions, etc.)

- ◆ Focus on strengths

- ◆ Teacher training

- ◆ Relaxation and movement activities

- ◆ Social skills training—Response strategies

- ◆ Extracurricular activities:
 - Target strengths/interests (science)

- ◆ Support for dealing with negative emotions

- ◆ Appropriate adult/student relationships

- ◆ Nonverbal cues for help

◆ Peer Support Systems (e.g., lunch buddies)

◆ Recess activities



• Target unstructured time (lunch clubs, etc.)

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Quotations from page 1:

¹Little, L. (2002). Middle-class mothers' perceptions of peer and sibling victimization among children

with Asperger's syndrome and nonverbal learning disorders. *Issues in comprehensive Pediatric*

Nursing, 25:1, 43-57. (Quotation on page 49.)

²Shoener, RF, Kinnealey, M, & Keonig, K. P. (2008). You can know me now if you listen: Sensory,

motor, and communication issues in a nonverbal person with autism.

American Journal of

Occupational Therapy, 62:5, 547-553. (Quotation on page 551.)

Selected Resources

Attwood, Tony (2006). *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*.

Beane (1999). *The Bully Free Classroom*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing Inc.

Bluestein, Jane (2001). *Creating Emotionally Safe Schools: A guide for parents and educators*. Health Communications, Inc. Deerfield Beach, FL.

Davis, Stan (2007). *Schools Where Everyone Belongs: Practical Strategies for Reducing Bullying*,

2nd ed. Chicago, IL : Research Press. (Stan's other book on empowering bystanders also terrific.)

Dubin, Nick (2007). *Asperger Syndrome and Bullying: Strategies and Solutions*. Philadelphia, PA:

Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Heinrichs, Rebekah (2003). *Perfect Targets: Asperger Syndrome and Bullying*. Shawnee

Mission, KS: AAPC www.asperger.net

Jensen, Eric (1998). *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision

and Curriculum Development.

Miller, LJ (2006). *Sensational Kids*. NY: G.P Putnam's Sons

Williams, Esther (2007). *The Bully, the Bullied, and Beyond*. YouthLight Inc. Chapin, SC

www.youthlightbooks.com

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Selected Childrens' Books about Bullying and/or Accepting Differences

Codell, Esme R. (2003). *Sahara Special*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children. (Learning

differences: story of an older elementary student who has to repeat a grade.)

Hassler, Eveline (1977). *Martin Is Our Friend*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.

(Physical, cognitive and

visual disabilities.)

Leoni, Leo (1963). *Swimmy*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. (Great early childhood book about

differences and friendship.)

Levine, Mel (1993). *All Kinds of Minds: A young student's book about learning abilities and learning*

disorders. Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service, Inc.

Ludwig, Trudy (2006). *Just Kidding*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press. (Trudy has other great books as well!)

McCain, Becky Ray (2001). *Nobody Knew What to Do: A story about bullying*.

Morton Grove, IL:

Albert Whitman and Company. (Good for elem. students—teacher helps address issue.)

Mitchell, L. (1999). *Different Just Like Me*. Watertown MA: Charlesbridge.

(All kinds of folks.)

Ochiai, Midori. (2006). *Different Croaks for Different Folks: All about children with special learning*

needs. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. (ASD)

Parr, Todd (2001). *It's Okay to Be Different*. NY, NY: Little, Brown and Company. (Fun picture book!)

Paterson, Katherine (1977). *Bridge to Terabithia*. NY, NY: Harper Collins.

(Good upper elem/MS novel.)

Rogers, Fred (2000). *Let's talk about it: Extraordinary friends*. New York, NY: Puffin Books.

Seskin, S & Shamblin, A. 2002. *Don't Laugh at Me*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.

Tyler, Michael (2005). *The Skin You Live In*. Chicago Children's' Museum.

Wheeler, Susan (2005). *Aunt Scarlett's Farm*. Storybook for elementary school students about a girl

with a physical disability. (See susanwheeleronline.com for book and other resources.)

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Willis, Jeanne (1999). *Susan Laughs*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, LLC. (Beautiful and deceptively simple early childhood book—wheelchair.)

Zeier, Joan (1993). *Stick Boy*. NY: Atheneum. (Upper elem/MS about bullying, being different, and disability.)

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