

Foreword

The complex, yet often subtle, needs of children and youth with Asperger Syndrome often puzzle parents, professionals, and others coming into contact with these individuals. Mostly exhibiting average to above-average IQ and few, if any, distinctive physical characteristics, many of these students are misunderstood and their behaviors misinterpreted. Given that Asperger Syndrome has been included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* only since 1994, only a few practical, user-friendly resources exist to turn to for help.

With *Children and Youth With Asperger Syndrome: Strategies for Success in Inclusive Settings*, Brenda Smith Myles fills a yawning gap in the literature on autism spectrum disorders (ASD) for general educators. The book discusses the characteristics of ASD and, more importantly, presents effective interventions for helping students with ASD and other pervasive developmental disorders reach their greatest potential in the schools, ultimately permitting them to lead fulfilling and productive lives as contributing members of society.

Written to be immediately accessible to busy educators and others coming in contact with students with Asperger Syndrome, the book starts out with a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of ASD, with a particular focus on the three major areas where ASD has an impact—communication, social skills, and sensory issues. Assessment issues are also addressed as necessary to designing appropriate programming. Again, this is done in a straightforward “how to” manner based on the author’s extensive practical as well as theoretical and research knowledge about individuals on the autism spectrum.

Each chapter opens with a short vignette or two fulfilling the dual purpose of bringing the content material alive for the reader and creating a framework for addressing the myriad challenges school personnel face in

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educating children with ASD, ranging from classroom accommodations to social interaction and emotional regulation. Examples sprinkled liberally throughout the book further sharpen the topics of discussion for the reader.

The hallmark of good educational planning and intervention for students with disabilities is when implementation of these techniques ends up benefiting the entire classroom of students, and thus serves as an extension of good teaching practice. In Chapter 3, examples of such interventions include the easy-to-remember mnemonics “Write Add Decide Execute” and “Sort Purge Assign Containerize Equalize,” designed to help educators assist students with the difficult challenges of managing time and space, respectively, within their immediate surroundings. Chapter 4 is chock full of suggestions on providing the predictability and structure that is essential for the academic success of students with Asperger Syndrome. Many people who do not have Asperger Syndrome will most likely find these recommendations helpful as well.

In sum, *Children and Youth With Asperger Syndrome: Strategies for Success in Inclusive Settings* represents perfection in the art and science of combining research-based intervention and practical experiences with crystal-clear writing to set forth a cornucopia of practical, easy-to-implement interventions designed to provide students with Asperger Syndrome equal opportunity to excel in school with their peers. Where possible, the interventions are designed to de-emphasize students’ differences from their classmates, thereby maximizing an inclusive atmosphere in the classroom.

As a person with Asperger Syndrome, it is clear to me and many of my peers that Brenda Smith Myles is one of the very rare persons who, in addition to understanding Asperger Syndrome, knows how to assist others to help those of us with this condition make sense of an often confusing educational environment and use our strengths to excel in school, and later on in life.

The outcome of Brenda’s brilliant work is a book offering almost everything an educator needs to know to work effectively with children and youth with Asperger Syndrome.

—Stephen Shore

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