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Gifted Students With Asperger Syndrome

Strategies for Strength-Based Programming

MARGARITA BIANCO, DOUGLAS E. CAROTHERS, AND LYDIA R. SMILEY



Gifted students with Asperger syndrome (AS) frequently exhibit behaviors that puzzle and challenge teachers and other professionals. They display many of the behaviors typically associated with AS and therefore receive educational interventions designed to address their deficit areas. Often lacking is strength-based programming—that is, educational planning with systematic attention to students' learning strengths, interests, gifts, and talents. If their strengths are not addressed, these students are at social, emotional, and academic risk. Gifted students with AS require dually differentiated instruction, including interventions that foster interests and strengths while providing strategies to compensate for areas of weakness. This article offers suggestions and resources for developing strength-based programming for gifted students with Asperger syndrome.

Keywords: *gifted students; autism; disabilities; special education; curriculum; general and special education; collaboration*

Daniel (a pseudonym) is a very bright, 9-year-old, fourth-grade student. Despite his intelligence, Daniel has a history of social, emotional, behavioral, and learning problems. He has had numerous evaluations and diagnoses, including dyslexia, clinical depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and most recently, Asperger syndrome (AS). Daniel's profile illustrates the intersection of giftedness and his disability.

Daniel has many strengths. He is highly verbal, has an extensive vocabulary, and is a visual learner. He is extremely knowledgeable in the areas of entomology, arachnology, and paleontology. He can spend many hours drawing insects, spiders, and dinosaurs, or watching documentaries

on any of these subjects. Despite his reading disability and difficulties with fine motor skills, Daniel's fascination with his favorite subject motivated him to spend several weeks creating a 22-page illustrated book detailing what he observed in one of his videos on prehistoric arthropods. Daniel is a visual thinker with an incredible memory, particularly for facts related to his interests. Daniel enjoys time with adults and challenges them to test him by asking him anything about insects!

Like many students with AS, Daniel has numerous problems. He has a narrow range of interests and is intolerant of change in routine. Daniel has difficulty regulating when and for how long it is appropriate to talk about his interest areas. When bored, frustrated, or overstimulated, Daniel is subject to meltdowns, which can include screaming, throwing objects, or becoming physically aggressive with peers or adults. Although he desperately wants to have friends, Daniel does not know how to have socially appropriate conversations or interactions with his peers. He spends much of his time alone.

He demonstrates traits of giftedness while displaying characteristic AS behaviors. Many characteristics often associated with giftedness are also present in students with AS (Neihart, 2000); however, there are distinctions. For example, many gifted students may become frustrated when bored; yet this is not likely to elicit a prolonged outburst. Unfortunately, many gifted students with disabilities (also referred to as twice-exceptional) are not identified as gifted or do not meet the criteria for a school's gifted services. Students like Daniel puzzle teachers who want to meet their students' needs but do not know how.

Individuals with AS have social interaction impairments, which include difficulty in understanding the rules of social behavior. In other words, they lack a general common sense and awareness of social standards (e.g., establishing eye contact, proximity to others, discerning what may be considered rude behavior, knowing how and when to take turns; Myles & Southwick, 1999). Students with AS also misinterpret verbal and nonverbal social cues, which causes conflicts in social settings. As a result of these and other behaviors, students with AS generally have difficulty establishing and maintaining friendships (Myles & Simpson, 2002). Gifted students with AS experience the same challenges.

Gifted students with AS need a dually differentiated curriculum (i.e., programming that considers the full range of students' abilities and limitations). Baum, Cooper, and Neu (2001) describe dual differentiation as "meeting the needs of students who exhibit two contradictory sets of learning characteristics by creating a balance between nurturing strengths and compensating for learning deficits" (p. 481). Unfortunately, for many twice-exceptional students, remediating deficits takes precedence over attending to students' gifts and talents (Baum, Owen, & Dixon, 2004; Winebrenner, 2003). This situation can be particularly frustrating and damaging for students who desperately need academic challenges and avenues to demonstrate their knowledge. Educational planning for gifted students with AS must

include attention to students' interests and strengths, an essential aspect of planning for twice-exceptional students (Weinfeld, Barnes-Robinson, Jeweler, & Shevitz, 2005). Specific techniques are necessary for developing a strength-based curriculum for gifted students with AS.

Educational Planning for a Continuum of Abilities

Educational planning for gifted students with AS requires thoughtful consideration to the duality of the students' needs by attending to the range of abilities, interests, and deficits. Strength-based instruction for gifted students with AS uses instructional methods commonly found in gifted and talented programs. Educational planning should provide a stimulating environment emphasizing high-level abstract thinking, creativity, and an authentic problem-solving approach. When using a strength-based approach, lessons and units of instruction are motivating, promote active inquiry, and include a variety of options for students to use their strengths to demonstrate knowledge. Strength-based instruction is designed around the student's interests and includes interdisciplinary thematic instruction, the use of mentors, authentic learning, authentic assessments, and strength-based accommodations.

Identify the Passion and Use it

Teachers of gifted and talented students have long used their students' passions to create lessons, research projects, and entire interdisciplinary thematic units. One noted characteristic of individuals with AS is excessive isolated interest in a narrow area (Ghaziuddin & Mountain-Kimchi, 2004). For gifted students with AS, using their passions to develop interdisciplinary thematic units creates numerous opportunities to teach academic and social skills while simultaneously broadening the area of interest. Winter-Messiers (2007) discussed how students with AS desperately want teachers to incorporate their special interests into the curriculum. Furthermore, when students in the study engaged in their interest areas, researchers observed marked improvement in several areas, including social communication and fine motor skills.

Teachers are encouraged to work with their gifted student with AS and create a concept map detailing expanded areas of study around the student's interest. It may be helpful for the teacher to do some of the initial

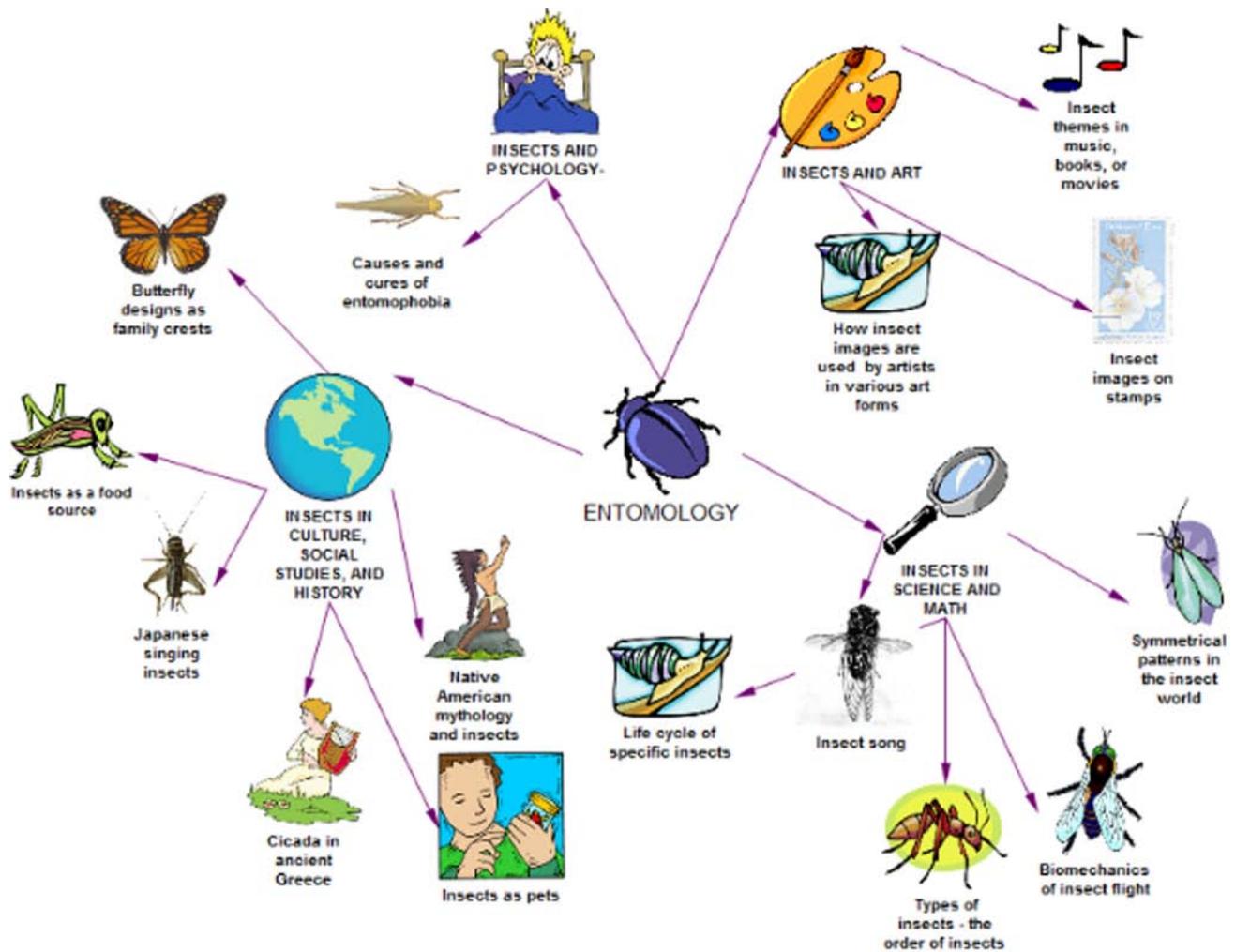


Figure 1. Entomology concept map.

brainstorming and research. For example, Daniel's passion for entomology can become a broader interdisciplinary thematic unit to include art, math, literature, history, and cultural studies (see Figure 1).

Once the concept map is complete, teachers can design lessons, create independent projects, and develop unit assessments based on the interests of their student with AS. Table 1 illustrates an example of Daniel's interdisciplinary thematic unit. It should be noted that many of the suggested activities require teacher guidance, supervision, and instructional scaffolding. Building an interdisciplinary unit can also trigger ideas for other resources, including how to use experts in the field as mentors.

Use of Mentors and Expert Professionals

Mentoring and the use of expert professionals is a critical component of gifted education. Mentoring has

been described as a "reciprocal role relationship between a master and a novice. Each accepts the other as a worthy and capable person" (Coleman & Cross, 2001, p. 325). The benefits of mentoring programs for gifted learners with and without disabilities have been well documented (Purcell, Renzulli, McCoach, & Spottiswoode, 2001; Siegle & McCoach, 2005). For gifted students with disabilities, mentoring offers opportunities to focus on areas of strength and interest while building self-confidence and exploring potential career paths (Shevitz, Weinfeld, Jeweler, & Barnes-Robinson, 2003).

Telementoring, or mentoring via the Internet, offers gifted students with AS limitless opportunities to have contact with experts anywhere in the world. This form of mentoring can be through nationally established mentor programs, such as the International Telementor Program, or a more informal arrangement such as e-mail contact (Siegle, 2003) with, for example, a local museum curator

TABLE 1
Daniel's Entomology Interdisciplinary Thematic Unit

	Language Arts	Social Studies	Math/Science
Verbal-Linguistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research entomophobia (fear of insects) and how insects affect us psychologically • http://www.scienceinfrica.co.za/2003/october/insects.htm • Develop a myth busters PowerPoint presentation or video • Create an alphabetical list of all the insects you can name • Insect Haiku - Pick your favorite insect and write a Haiku poem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After reading http://www.insects.org/ced4/mythology.html, ask the librarian to help you find books on myths and legends from various cultures • Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast two legends that use insects in their story • Create your own legend with an insect as the main character. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the biomechanics of insect flight, http://www.nurseminerva.co.uk/adapt/insect.htm • Create a poster display of what you have learned (drawings, sketches, clip art, etc.); pick one (or more) classmates and discuss your findings • Research the vocabulary describing insect song (e.g., crepitation, stridulation), http://www.musicofnature.com/songsofinsects/iframes/tutorial.html
Logical-Mathematical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a survey to find out how insects affect your peers, what fears they have, and why; summarize your results in the form of a bar graph or other visual representation of your findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research how insects are used on stamps from different parts of the world, http://www.insects.org/class/stamps/index.html • Create a visual display of these stamps and identify which countries use them on a map • Create your own insect stamp and identify which country should use this and why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After researching and exploring symmetrical patterns in the insect world, http://insects.org/searchpro/?q=symmetry, design and create your own butterfly, http://insects.org/class/patterns/index.html • Name this butterfly and provide details such as where it will be found, life-span, and migration patterns • Research insect songs and categorize by insect family, http://www.musicofnature.com/songsofinsects/iframes/OLG_families.html
Visual-Spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate how insect images are used by artists in various art forms • Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast two of E.A. Seguy's pieces - then create your own using his style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research insects as pets and list all the materials you would need to build a small cage and keep an insect as a pet, http://www.musicofnature.com/songsofinsects/pets.html 	<p>Compare and contrast how two insects from different orders are similar and different; use a Venn diagram to illustrate your findings.</p> <p>Compare and contrast the work of E.A. Seguy and M.C. Escher</p>
Musical-Rhythmic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to "The Flight of the Bumblebee" by Rimsky-Korsakov; write a story to accompany this piece of music • Think of an insect and play any instrument to represent how this insect moves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After reading about singing insects in America create a map and identify where the singing insects are found, http://www.musicofnature.com/songsofinsects/iframes/OLG_families.html 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the song of insects, http://www.musicofnature.com/songsofinsects/index.html • Record some of your favorite insect songs and play for your friends (see if they can guess which insect song you are playing)
Bodily-Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choreograph a dance for "The Flight of the Bumblebee." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research how various cultures use dance to celebrate insects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a 3-D display to illustrate the biomechanics of insect flight; explain your display to your friends.
Naturalistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a poster to illustrate the order of insects • http://insects.org/entophiles/list.html 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a tasty insect recipe and share your treats with your friends, http://www.ent.iastate.edu/misc/insectsasfood.html • Investigate how insects are used as a food source throughout the world; draw a world map and identify which insects are used as a food source and where, http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Entomology/ythfacts/bugfood/yf813.htm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a model demonstrating how an insect makes sound, http://www.musicofnature.com/songsofinsects/singinginsects.html

(continued)

TABLE 1 (continued)

	Language Arts	Social Studies	Math/Science
Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a board game about the life cycle of an insect of your choice; teach a friend how to play the game - then play! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with a friend and find an insect recipe to cook together, http://www.ent.iastate.edu/misc/insectsasfood.html 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite a friend to help you photograph (or draw) insects in and around the school or neighborhood; together, create an illustrated book for your classroom library
Intrapersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What insect would you like to be and why? Keep a journal for one week and write about your life as that insect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine you are an entomologist from a country of your choice; write a story about a day in your life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of all the things you have learned in this unit and all the things you still have questions about

or a nationally recognized photojournalist. Whether formal or informal, finding a mentor for your gifted student with AS offers many educational, social, and emotional benefits. In addition, working with a mentor creates opportunities for integrating truly authentic learning experiences in the overall educational plan.

Incorporate Authentic Assessment and Authentic Learning: Solving Real Problems

Authentic assessment aims to evaluate students' abilities in authentic, real-world contexts. Students are asked to use analytical skills and demonstrate concepts they have learned by engaging in any number of activities. For example, students with AS could demonstrate their learning by conducting and interpreting research in their area of interest and solving real-world problems. Because authentic assessment is based on performance and students are asked to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways, this method of assessment lends itself well to using students' strengths, an ideal alternative to traditional assessment for gifted students with AS.

Authentic learning allows students to investigate real-life problems that target a real audience in the student's area of interest (Renzulli, Gentry, & Reis, 2004). Real-life problems become an avenue for students to explore the skills and products used by professionals in the field and the "vehicle through which everything from basic skills to advanced content and processes come together in the form of student-developed products and services" (Renzulli et al., 2004, p. 74). Authentic learning has been used successfully with many twice-exceptional students (Baum et al., 2001).

What might authentic learning look like for a gifted student with AS? In Daniel's case, authentic learning experiences could be created around his interest and knowledge in arachnology. Daniel knows that many young children fear spiders because of misinformation. Along with his mentor and teachers, Daniel could create a survey to learn what his peers know and do not know about spiders, what they would like to know, and what specific fears they have.

Using his survey data, Daniel could research and develop a presentation to clarify misconceptions, allay fears, and then share this information with his peers in the form of a visual presentation. This real-world project becomes an avenue for research, learning, and authentic assessment.

Strength-Based Accommodations to Access and Demonstrate Learning

Strength-based accommodations are instructional strategies that provide students with access to the curriculum based on students' interests and learning strengths (Colorado Department of Education, 2005). Strength-based accommodations place emphasis on students' learning profiles and take their readiness and interests into consideration. For example, curriculum compacting, a method commonly used with gifted students, is an instructional technique in which teachers conduct pre-assessments to determine students' knowledge and skill development in a content area prior to instruction to determine what the student already knows and can do (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007). The teacher can then provide instruction and curricula adaptation that meets the student's individual needs. In other words, students who have already mastered particular skills or concepts within an instructional unit are provided supports to move forward and learn something new and different.

Another example of strength-based accommodations would include creating instructional plans with multi-option assignments that allow students to use their strengths, without interference of their disability, to access learning and demonstrate knowledge. For example, many students with AS tend to be visual thinkers and learners (Neihart, 2000); knowing that some students think in concrete, literal representations can help teachers design strength-based accommodations to access learning by using this strength. The use of diagrams, graphs, concept maps, timelines, outlines, and photographs can help these learners access the information they need. Likewise,

TABLE 2
Assistive Technology and Software Resources for Gifted
Students With Asperger Syndrome

Hoagies Gifted Education Page (http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/software.htm). Software favorites.
CAST Universal Design for Learning (http://www.cast.org/ http://lessonbuilder.cast.org/). Many resources including the lesson builder, a great Web site for teachers to learn about and apply principles of Universal Design for Learning.
Inspiration® and Kidspiration™ software (http://www.inspiration.com/home.cfm). Software to help students visualize, think, organize, and learn using their visual strengths. Students and teachers can use this software to create graphic organizers and various templates for all content areas.
TimeLiner Deluxe (http://www.autismcoach.com/Timeliner_Deluxe.htm). Software for visual learners helps students and teachers create timelines and depict events with pictures and video clips.
Mind Reading (http://www.autismcoach.com/Mind%20Reading.htm). Teaches social skills by helping students recognize facial expressions and emotions in others.
Junior CAD and BoxIT (http://www.autismcoach.com/junior_cad_and_boxit.htm). Designed to give students a taste of 3D shape manipulation in design work.
Picture It (http://www.slatersoftware.com/pit.html). Picture Assisted Literacy.
Dragon Naturally Speaking (http://www.digitalriver.com/v2.0-img/operations/scansoft/site/367062/367062_dns-talk.html). This software turns speech into text.
Story Grammar Marker® Kit (http://mindwingconcepts.com/products.asp). Icon-based developmental writing maps that connect language to literacy and fosters modeling and guided practice.

students can demonstrate what they have learned using their visual strengths. Rather than taking a test or orally presenting a book response, gifted students with AS should be offered a choice of visually based assignments to demonstrate their knowledge (e.g., create a photo essay, design a multimedia presentation, develop illustrations, or construct a semantic map). There are many software programs and assistive technology devices that can help gifted students with AS use their visual strength for learning (see Table 2 for a resource list and Web sites that offer detailed information).

How could Daniel's strength in visual memory be used to create strength-based strategies to learn social skills? Typical of students with AS, Daniel has significant deficits in social skills. He has a difficult time working in unstructured group settings and does not know how to interact with his peers on the playground. Armed with a digital camera, Daniel could photograph his peers working in cooperative learning groups, talking to each other, sharing materials, or playing on the playground. Daniel can use these photographs as a visual reference of appropriate interactions. With the help of his teacher, Daniel could organize his photos into categories and create a digital photostory with captions and text. Similarly, Daniel's teachers or classmates could photograph him behaving appropriately in those situations. The photographs could become part of Daniel's visual cue system to serve as a reminder of what socially appropriate interactions look like. Additionally, the photographs should be used to create personalized social stories, comic strip conversations, and visual schedules. For example, the photographs of Daniel's peers working together in a group could be used, along with written words, to create

a social story (Gray, 1993) to improve his understanding of cooperative learning and to teach him specific behaviors to use when interacting with others in a group.

Developing strength-based educational programs for gifted students with AS requires thoughtful planning and collaboration with families and other professionals. For example, gifted students with AS, like many twice-exceptional, often pursue their interests and demonstrate their leadership outside of school. Parents would be keenly aware of their child's strengths, interests, and needs. Furthermore, collaboration between educators is important, because despite the fact that a student like Daniel may be educated exclusively in the general education classroom, other individuals such as special education teachers may have specialized knowledge regarding instruction in social skills and differentiating instruction that will be of benefit to both Daniel and his teacher. The gifted education specialist will have expert knowledge on how to identify students' strengths and nurture their creativity and interests. Finally, expert mentors should be brought into the process so that they can share their knowledge of the student's interests and provide ideas for how these interests may be addressed in the classroom through authentic learning experiences.

Planning begins with a focus on the student's strengths and interests. Special education and general education teachers are encouraged to start the process by collaborating with the student, his or her family, the school's gifted and talented coordinator, and possibly the student's mentor to address a series of questions. The following questions are a good place to start:

Name: _____	Grade: _____
School: _____	Date: _____
Team members:	
Student's learning strengths:	
Interests and passions:	
Deficits:	
Student's strengths to teach academic and social skills:	
Authentic assessment:	
Authentic learning experience(s):	
Central theme for interdisciplinary thematic unit:	
Resources (print, film, audio, internet, community based, etc.):	
Experts in the field and potential mentor (international, national, local):	
Strength/interest-based accommodations:	

Figure 2. Strength-based strategies plan.

1. What are _____'s interests and passions?
2. What are _____'s learning strengths?
3. How can I use his or her strengths to teach academic and social skills?
4. What are some real-life problems in _____'s interest area that my student can explore?
 - What might authentic learning and authentic assessment look like for this student?
5. How can I teach and challenge my student in ways that are not affected by his or her disability?
6. How can I build an interdisciplinary thematic unit around his or her interests and learning strengths?
7. What resources (print, film, audio, Internet, community based, etc.) can we access?
8. Who are the local, national, and international experts to contact as potential mentors?

Once these questions have been addressed, the team can complete the strength-based strategies plan (see Figure 2) and begin developing a program for their gifted student with AS that focuses on the student's interests and strengths.

Daniel may represent some gifted students with AS; however, many students may experience other problems

as a result of the characteristics often associated with AS. As Myles and Simpson (2001, 2002) point out, although the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th Edition, Text Revision; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) guides the diagnostic process for AS and provides a general understanding of the disorder that teachers and other school professionals need to understand, the school-related behaviors of AS are not specifically addressed in the diagnostic criteria. Furthermore, the coexistence of giftedness with AS presents its own unique challenges for students. Table 3 outlines other behaviors not addressed here, provides references for more information, and suggests strength-based strategies to explore.

Conclusion

Gifted students with AS need and deserve educational planning that focuses on their strengths and interests.

TABLE 3
Problems Experienced by Gifted Students With Asperger Syndrome and Strength-Based Strategies

Problems	Print Resources	Strength-Based Strategies and Accommodations to Explore
Communication: Refers to impairments in pragmatic language skills such as taking turns, selecting topics appropriate to the conversational partner, and initiating and terminating conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koegel, R. L. (2007). Social development in individuals with high functioning autism and Asperger disorder. <i>Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 32</i>, 140-141. • Moore, S. T. (2002). <i>Asperger syndrome and the elementary school experience: Practical solutions for academic and social difficulties</i>. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visual strength and create (or have student create) a photo essay or video, along with narrative descriptions of students engaged in social interactions (e.g., taking turns, sharing, playing games). • With teacher supervision and guidance, have the student create his or her own Social Stories™ and Comic Book Conversations™ with photos taken of classmates. With supervision, the student can write and direct peers in a short (3–5 min.) play using these social stories. • Student can pick short clips from favorite movies (that include conversations), transcribe the dialogue, and ask a friend to help re-enact those scenes. Teacher can create a visual representation of the conversation (e.g., a matrix identifying aspects of the conversation) and facilitate learning by helping student recognize the reciprocity in the conversation (e.g., initiating and terminating the conversation, turn taking).
Central coherence: Refers to the ability to attend to details as well as the whole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winner, M. (2002). Assessment of social skills for students with Asperger syndrome and high-functioning autism. <i>Assessment for Effective Intervention, 27</i>, 73-80. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer student opportunities to participate in structured (and timed) speech and debate on topics of interest. • To limit confusion, provide written or other visually based directions for assignments, projects, or expectations. • Demonstrate relationships of part to whole using graphic organizers. • Create a visually based conceptual framework or overview of content material to help students conceptualize the part to whole relationships. • Emphasize mastery of concepts and minimize attention to unimportant detail and drill and practice. • Provide opportunities for real-world investigations and experiences to expand restricted interest area and help make connections to skills, concepts, and career exploration.
Executive functioning: Refers to problems with prioritizing, planning, shifting attention, and using working memory, among other cognitive functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myles, B. S., Ferguson, H., & Hagiwara, T. (2007). Using a personal digital assistant to improve the recording of homework assignments by an adolescent with Asperger syndrome. <i>Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 22</i>(2), 96-99. • Verte, S., Geurts, H. M., Roeyers, H., Oosterlaan, J., & Sergeant, J. A. (2006). Executive functioning in children with an autism spectrum disorder: Can we differentiate within the spectrum. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 36</i>, 351-372. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach students how to use a personal digital assistant for remembering homework assignments and general time management. • Provide training in cognitive behavior modification, enabling the student to self-monitor, self-evaluate, and self-reinforce for the performance of desired tasks or nonperformance of undesired tasks. • Provide attribution retraining to assist the student in perceiving himself or herself as making and following through with appropriate decisions and reinforce verbal self-regulation.

(continued)

TABLE 3 (continued)

Problems	Print Resources	Strength-Based Strategies and Accommodations to Explore
Writing composition and handwriting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Griswold, D. E., Barnhill, G. P., Myles, B. S., & Simpson, R. L. (2002). Asperger syndrome and academic achievement. <i>Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 17</i>, 94-102. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use mnemonic study strategies to help students with choice and decision-making tasks. Allow student to e-mail himself or herself assignments or reminders. Use Inspiration® and Kidspiration™ software to help students organize writing ideas and compose products. Use the student's interest area(s) for teaching narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and creative writing skills. Encourage the student to share writings on topic of interest with peers, mentor, and real audiences related to interests (e.g., community service organizations).
Emotional regulation: Refers to the individual's capacity to self-monitor his or her physiological arousal and emotional states	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Myles, B. S., & Southwick, J. (1999). <i>Asperger syndrome and difficult moments: Practical solutions for tantrums, rage, and meltdowns</i>. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create visually based organizers to serve as reminders and a tool for self-monitoring. Use advanced organizers and provide outlines for class work. Team the student with a well-organized student for collaborative projects. Teach student to self-monitor and graph reactions to situations that typically elicit meltdowns.

Exclusive focus on students' deficits not only reduces motivation to learn but also puts students at risk of academic failure and depression. Strength-based educational planning prevents students' disabilities from becoming an obstacle to their learning. By using a strength-based approach, special education teachers and general education teachers will begin to view their twice-exceptional students from a new perspective and start the planning process with deliberate attention to the students' interests and strengths. This should lead to using professional experts as mentors and incorporating authentic assessment and authentic learning into the program along with strength-based accommodations. Collaboration with other school professionals and the student's family is key to the strength and success of these programs.

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