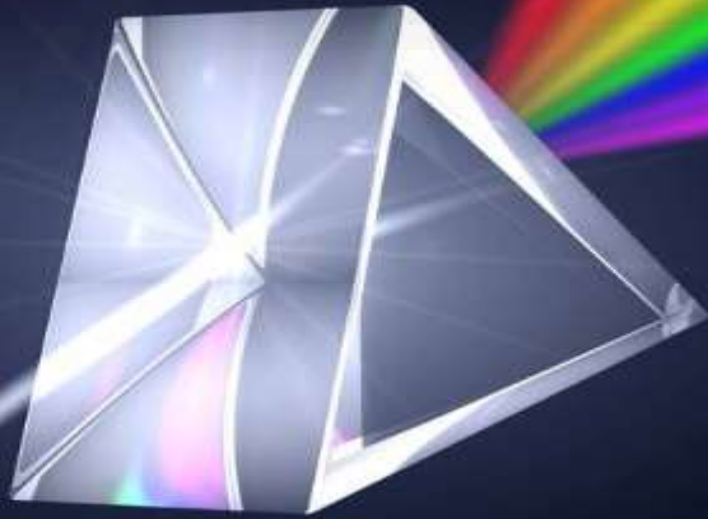


Working effectively with AS students



Dr Emma Goodall
elgoodall@gmail.com

Current diagnostic criteria

1. Social and communication deficits
2. Fixated interests and repetitive behaviours (including unusual sensory behaviours)

The 'severity' level has to be considered and recorded.

Level 1 is 'requiring support'

Level 2 'requiring substantial support'

Level 3 'requiring very substantial support'



Students on the autism spectrum

Language

- May be verbal, non-verbal or sometimes one and sometimes the other
- Visual communication systems support the development of language
- Difficulties with social skills
- Difficulty with communication

IQ

May have :

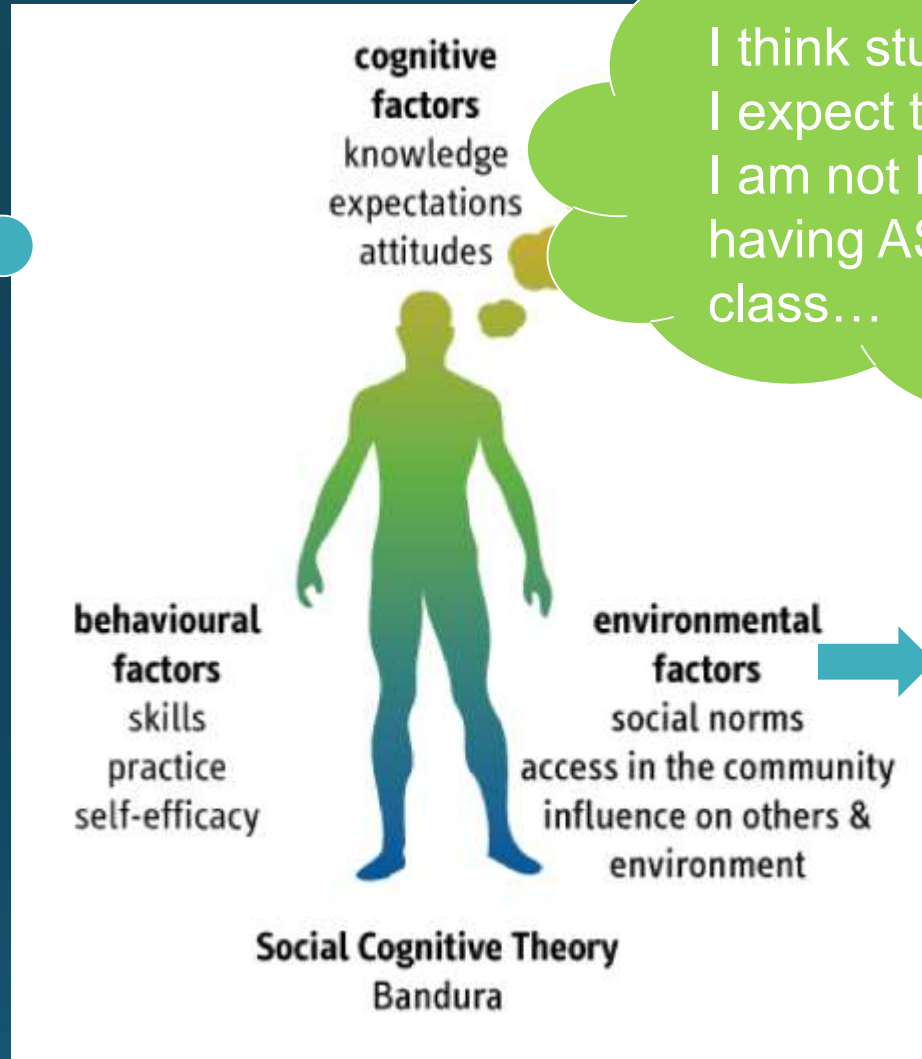
- an intellectual disability
- an average IQ
- IQ at the genius level

Co-morbidities

May have:

- a mental illness
- a muscular-skeletal disorder
- Trisomy 21
- epilepsy
- dyspraxia, dyslexia, ADHD
- Other genetic disorders
- OCD

Sam's behaviour is so bad, I don't know how I am expected to teach him or what....



I think students on the AS.....
I expect they will....
I am not looking forward to having AS students in my class...

Society portrays people on the AS as either really intelligent but socially incapable or as totally dependent on others for life. I expect 'Sam' to be the latter... he can't even speak

Social cognitive theory and the self-fulfilling prophecy

Enhancing learning



What is different about learning & the autism spectrum?

“Teachers who do not see particular students as learners do not see themselves as able to teach those students”
(Morton, 2011)

AS students:

- Some teachers are so stupid
- I get marked down for no eye-contact but I'm autistic and I like to look all around the room to see where I am
- School is boring, I hate school
- I don't understand anything and I get bullied



To be effective educators must assume competence

- The student may not be able to do something YET, it does not mean they will never be able to...
- Nor does it mean they will learn how to in the same way that other people learn to....
- Splinter skills and/or passions can often be the pathway to a career and should be nurtured
- The ability to make and keep friends needs to be taught and is of huge importance to those on the AS but they may not want friends of their own biological age or peer group, preferring the company of those who like and/or understand them

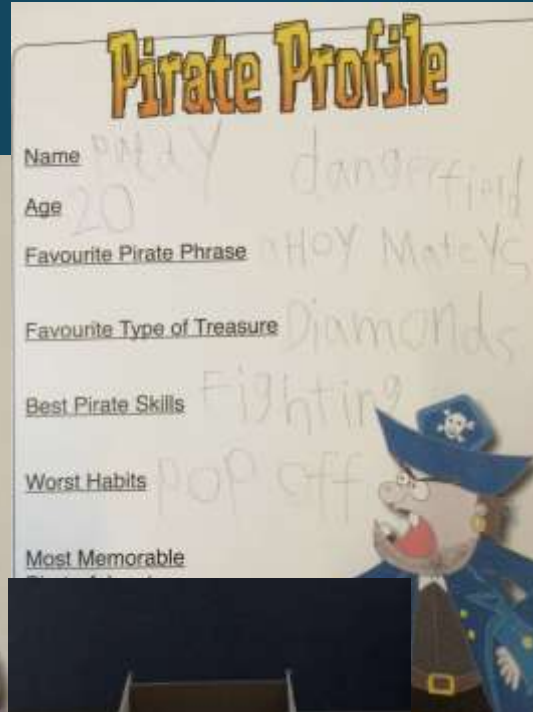
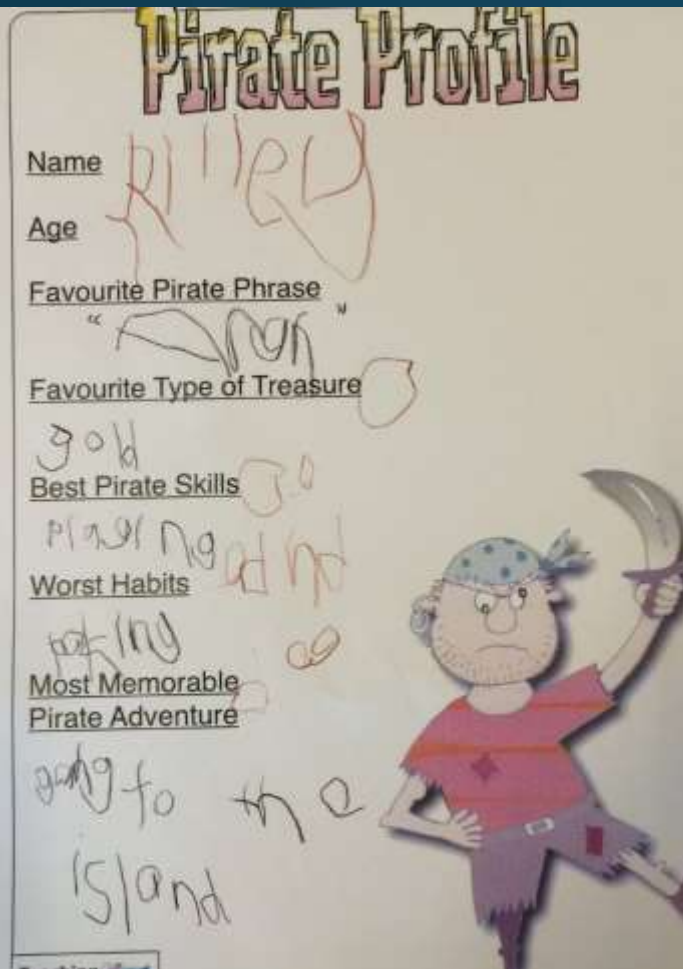
Knowing the diagnosis is not knowing the child/young person

In order to plan effectively for a student on the AS educators need to know the student, their AS characteristics, their strengths and difficulties, any co-morbidities, preferred learning styles and likes, dislikes and passionate interests.

All AS students can learn – it is much harder to predict educational and life outcomes for AS students than their peers. Verbal skills do not indicate IQ, IQ does not indicate resilience.

A non-verbal AS 4 year old may go on to become a university professor. A hyperlexic AS 4 year old may go on to develop a debilitating anxiety disorder & depression and be long-term unemployed.

Effective learning relies on the teaching of relevant skills using high interest tasks



If you assume we can, we will try. If you value our learning, you value us:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNyKHDPuuz0>

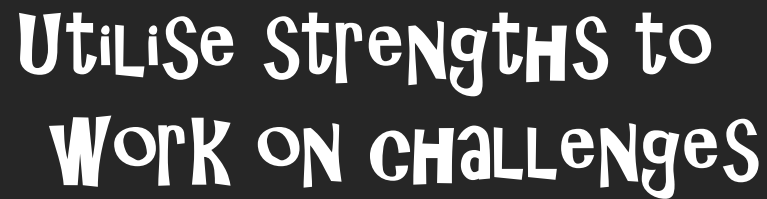
Evidence based best practice

- Difficulty with EBBP – the range of needs/skills on the AS means that one size never fits all – what is effective for one person may not work at all for another
- Unintended side effects are not measured in research into therapies.
- AS individuals interact differently with different people and/or things and often do not see status and so do not respond to that status
- New things/places/people can provoke anxiety so things can often get worse before they get better



Personalise all strategies:

- TiPs for Autism (Ministry of education, NZ)
- UCC and Ziggurat Model (Aspy & Grossman, 2011)
- NEPs/IEPs



**Utilise Strengths to
Work on Challenges**

Communication



- Some people on the AS will only communicate if they have to – set this up if needed
- Provide a range of communication options if possible (train everyone in the person's preferred/chosen method)
- There is no point in using the 'best' AAT system or sign if no-one around the AS student knows how to use it too



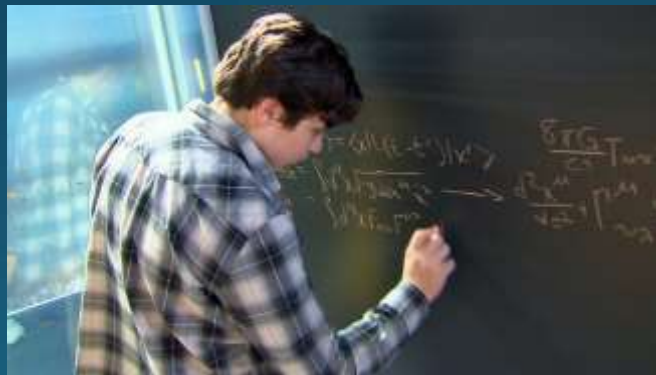
Strategies for effective communication:

- Minimize other external sensory input
- Gain student's attention
- Speak in short precise sentences
- Be specific SAY WHAT YOU MEAN & MEAN WHAT YOU SAY
- Write down or cartoon what you are saying & leave for person to reference

Strategies must:



- Be designed to minimize distress/stress
- Maximise interest in things to be learnt in order to maximise learning opportunities
- Value existing skills/knowledge
- Celebrate progress no matter how big or small



These things *can* all increase anxiety/stress/distress:

- Requiring eye contact
- Requiring a still body
- Preventing stims
- Negative attitudes or words directed at the person or their behaviour
- Too much sensory input
- Feeling unwell or tired or hungry

To stim is normal |'nɔ:m(ə)l|
adjective

1 conforming to a standard;
usual, typical, or expected

A stim is a self soothing behaviour
often used to regulate
sensory input or stress.

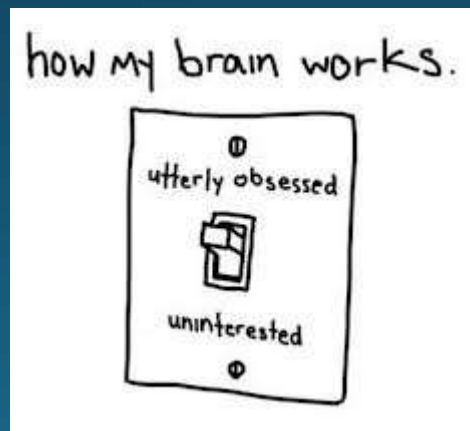
Flapping hands, spinning, swinging,
jumping, twirling hair, nail biting, rocking,
humming, pencil tapping, pacing,
drumming fingers.... can all be stims.

Everybody Stims!!

differentkindsofnormal.blogspot.com.au

Autistic Spectrum thinking

- Logical yet out of the box (Ministries of Health and Education, 2008)
- Can become fixated
- Often either hyper-focused or not interested
- These thinking styles can lead to spikey learning profiles and non-linear learning patterns.



Learning whilst anxious

You will be tested on your Japanese greetings as soon as this video has ended. If you score less than 9/10 I will be very disappointed and your employer will be notified that you failed to achieve.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uU5lkWqcdm0>

- Are you nervous?
- Does this set you up for successful learning?
- Do you think I think you will fail?
- Does think make you think you will fail?

AS Learning

Anxiety

↓ Stress

↓ Distress

↓ Overwhelmed

↓ Shutdown or meltdown

Engaging interest

↓ Desire to learn more

↓ Focus

↓ Learning

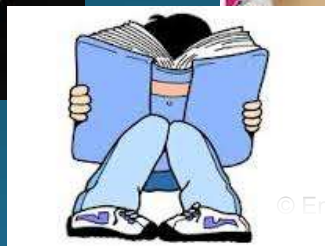
↓ Further explorations

↓ More learning



AS Motivation

- Often intrinsic
- Theoretically hard to motivate extrinsically
- Rewards/sanctions **MUST** be meaningful to the recipient not the giver
- Emotional/connection rewards **ARE** important



Effective teachers engage AS students' interest

- Either use topics/activities that interest the person on the AS and/or
- Ensure task is meaningful



- What are the possible issues with this activity?
- The activity is called rainbow writing and each day a letter is put into the child's book and they need to 'write' or 'draw' over it with 3-7 different coloured pens or pencils.
- Think about interest, sensory or motor issues, meaningfulness/pointlessness of activity, the effect of any perfectionism in the AS child etc

Instead:

- Make name cards for dinosaur bingo
- When your name card is called you can tell everyone one fact about that dinosaur
 - Think about interest, sensory or motor issues, meaningfulness/pointlessness of activity, the effect of any perfectionism in the AS child etc

Dinosaur Bingo



Mixosaurus



Moschops



Dinornis



Styracosaurus



Brachiosaurus



Lystrosaurus



Tarbosaurus
Hataar



Gorgosaurus
Libratus



Pterodactylus



Apatosaurus



Stegosaurus



Protoceratops



Sauroctonus



Indricotherium



Thylacosmilus



Diplodocus

Promoting good mental health

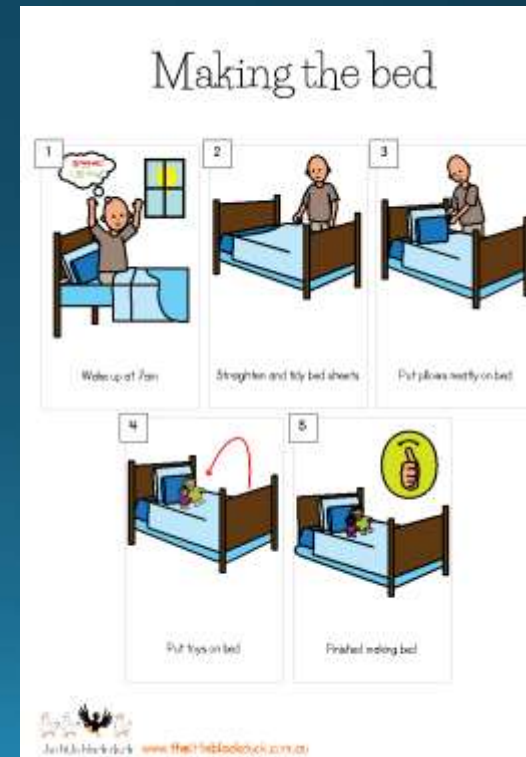
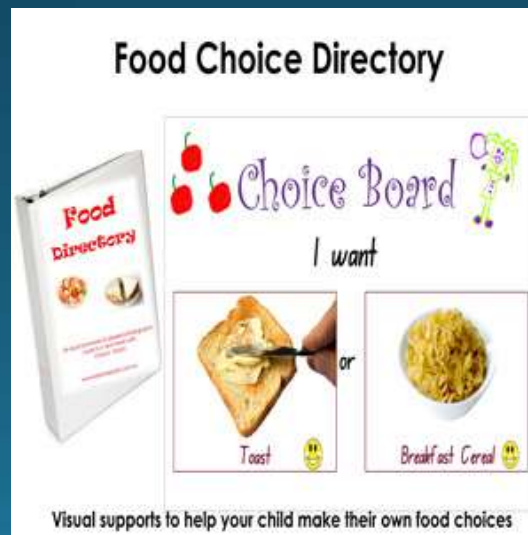
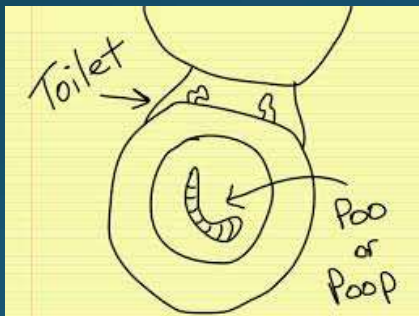
- Strong positive sense of I
- Acceptance and valuing of self
- Ability to seek and accept help when needed
- Resilience
- Support network of family &/or friend(s)
- Meaningful existence



<http://usergeneratededucation.wordpress.com/2013/06/30/resilience-the-other-21st-century-skills/>

Promoting physical well being

- Sensory profile strategy use in self care
- Useful/explicit self care visuals
- Verbal or cartooning prompts
- Involvement in food choices and preparation
- Nutrition education
- Explicit transfer of rationale for learning new skills (eg toileting)



Enabling AS students to be comfortable in self & around others

- Teach politeness
- Demonstrably value the person
- Stop bullying
- Enable AS students to watch before joining in (/need for how ever long they want to
- Teach specific strategies to interact with others (Coucovanis, 2005)
- Explicitly teach the hidden curriculum



Strategies to achieve potential

- Learn from the autistic spectrum community what realistic goals are – the family or team may be surprised
- Set goals WITH the AS student where possible
- Backwards or forwards chain tasks
- Use visual &/or verbal prompts
- Provide/offer support until it is no longer wanted or needed
- Teach people to self-advocate (Shore, various)
- Celebrate success

Problematic behaviour is a barrier to achieving



- Hurting self/others and/or damaging property is always going to be problematic for others and can/does have negative consequences especially age 14+
- Ways to communicate MUST be provided
- Sensory & emotional needs MUST be supported
- Others need to learn how to prevent meltdowns and shutdowns where possible and to recognise and respond to these when not prevented

Strategies to prevent problems

- Think long term – what is cute at 5 may be problematic at 16
- Differentiate between the behaviour/ communication and the person
- Set clear rules and boundaries for the person and the people around them
- Set people up for success
- Use meaningful rewards/reinforcers
- Give explicit feedback about what is correct and how to make improvements if needed
- Structure in support for perfectionism

Effective problem solving strategies:

- Look at all viewpoints; yours & the AS viewpoint & any relevant others
- Why is there an issue?
- What desired outcomes do you want?
- What outcomes are acceptable to the AS student?
- How do you get to those outcomes?



References

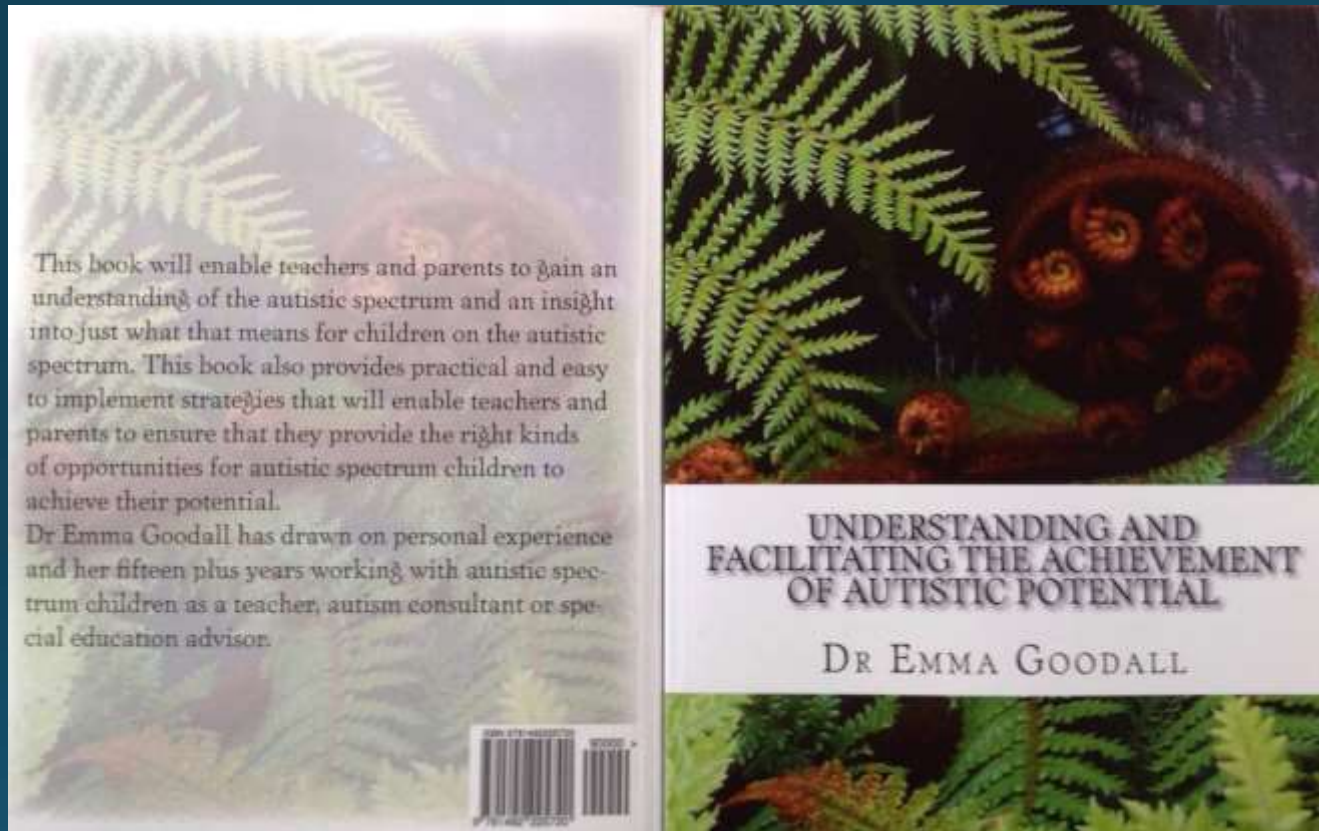
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More info at: <http://healthypossibilities.net> - or have a look at the following book: what to do, how to do it and why to do it for teachers, teacher aides and parents/whanau:



Hardcopy & Kindle versions via AMAZON or hardcopy available via AspieHelp