

Understanding Autism and the role of the school counselor



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Coun 527: Counseling Individuals with Diverse Needs

Opening Activity

**What is it like to have
Autism?**

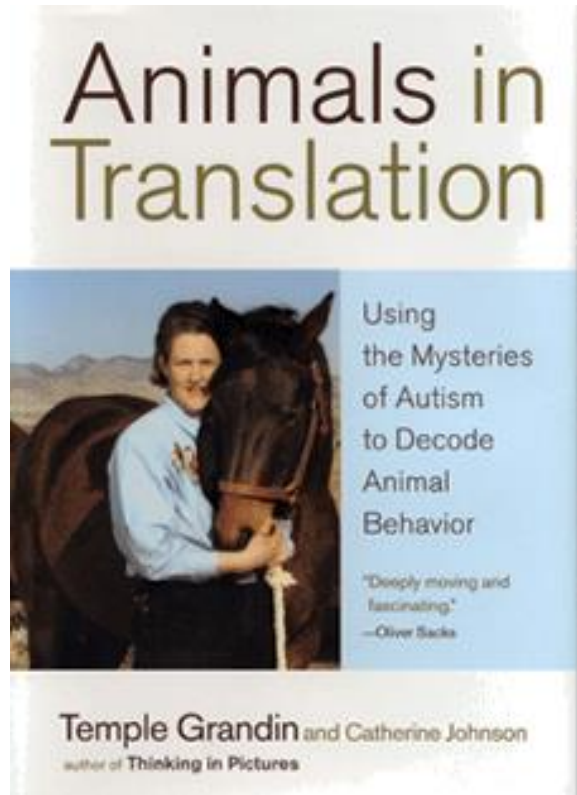
Please Break up into groups of five

Activity Reflection

- **What was that experience like?**
- **What part of that activity made it the most difficult to concentrate on the information being read to you?**
- **How much information from that excerpt did you take in?**



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcWx8UVhzpQ&feature=related>



Temple Grandin: Thinking in Pictures

Autism: A Definition

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. Autism is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is a "spectrum disorder" that affects individuals differently and to varying degrees. There is no known single cause of autism, but increased awareness and funding can help families today.

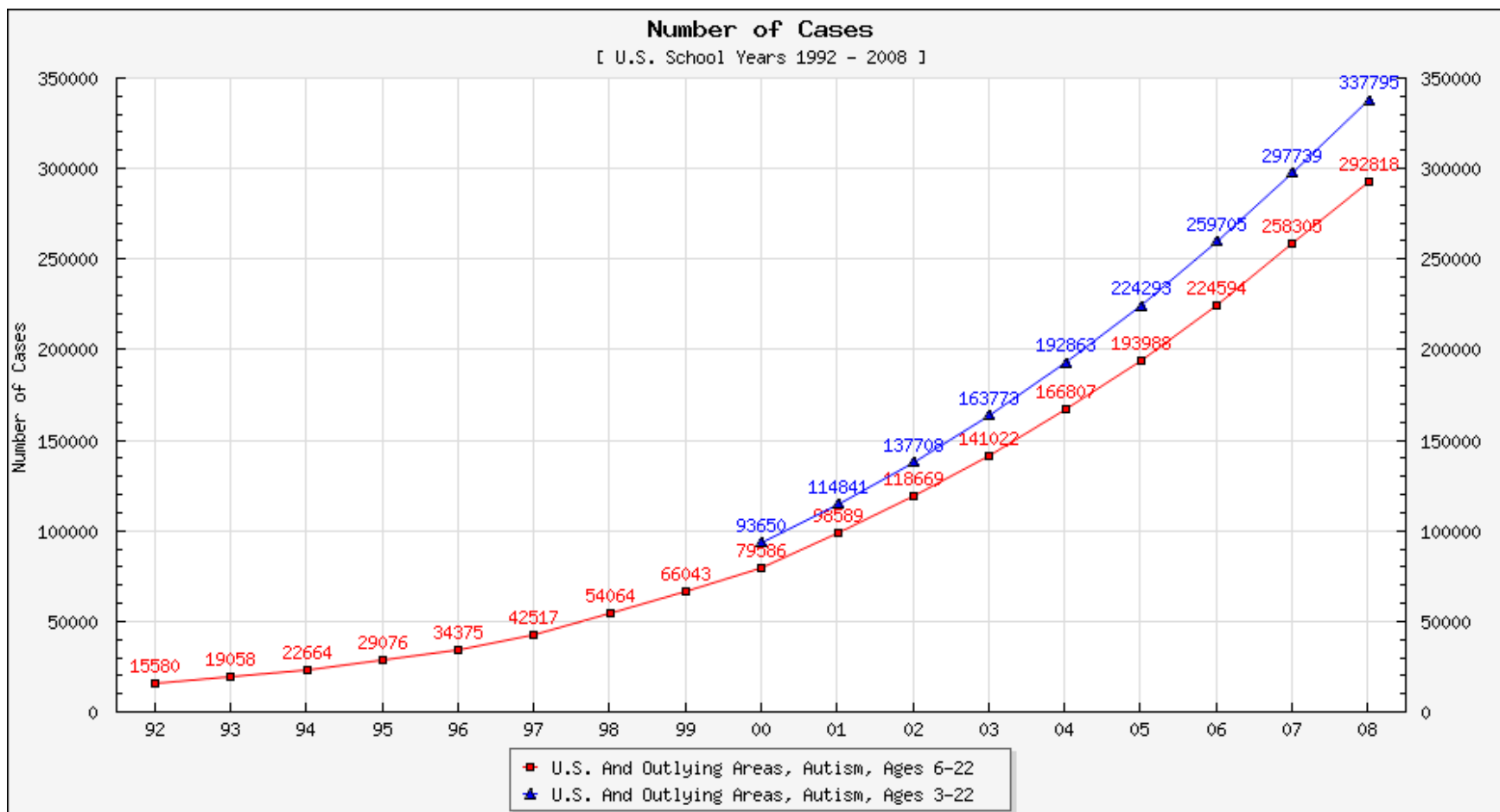
Source: <http://www.autism-society.org/about-autism/>

DSM IV-TR diagnostic criteria

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) does not have a single set of criteria in the DSM. It consists of the following 5 disorders:

- 1) Autistic Disorder
- 2) Asperger's Disorder
- 3) Rett's Disorder
- 4) Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
- 5) Pervasive Developmental Disorder NOS

Autism Rates in US Schools (1992-2008)



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Data: www.ideadata.org and www.cdc.gov/nchs/

Prevalence

Approximately 1 in 88 children

1 in 54 boys

1 in 252 girls

Occurs in all racial, social and socioeconomic groups

Source:Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network (2008)

Personal and social development

- Challenges with social interaction across the autism spectrum
- "Theory of mind"-difficulty understanding irony and sarcasm
- Struggle with the back and forth of conversations
- Lack eye contact
- Some autistic students are non-verbal

Post School outcomes according to the National Longitudinal Transition Study (2009)

- 79.7% of individual with autism attend some sort of post secondary school (vocational, 2yr, 4yr)
- 42.5% received a degree, license or certificate from a post secondary institution.
- 37.9% received a degree, license or diploma from a 4yr university.
- 79.5% Worked for pay other than around the house.

How this affects development

- Gives off negative messages to peers.
- Making friends can be challenging.
- Peer relationships are important to any child's social development and identity.
- School counselors can help improve social skills by using evidence based practices and helping other students understand autism.

Video Clip

- Triggers?
- What do you see?
- How does this make you feel?



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNZVV4Ciccg>

The role of school counselor

Elementary:

Provide classroom support in terms of social skills training

Help educate other students about autism

Help create structure and routines for student

High School:

Help plan for post secondary transitions

Help provide structure and plan for high school

Provide advice for classes and programs that support goals.

Best practices, interventions things to keep in mind

- Communicate with parents
- Manage the classroom environment appropriately
- Be aware of teaching styles
- Keep to the same routine
- Safe place/safe person
- Always use visuals
- Handwriting accommodations

Best practices, interventions, things to keep in mind

- Homework/ assignment considerations and accommodations
- Test accommodations
- Organizational skills
- Weave in special interest
- Social skills!!!!
- Encourage and teach self advocacy

Managing challenging behavior

Identify the behavior, where and when it occurs? What happens before it and how people react? It's important to understand that some challenging behavior may not be harmful to the student and/or others. Decide if the behavior is truly a problem. Does it interfere with learning of the student or others? Does it result in diminished peer interaction?

Try to find the reason or motivation behind the behavior. It can help to include the parents in this discussion. Perhaps slightly changing the environment can aid in eliminating the behavior.

Identify and describe alternative behavior to the student.

Reward positive and appropriate behavior.

Lesson and activities for students with autism

- Lesson #3 - Similarities and Differences
- Example Lesson
- Lesson #5 - Developing a Code of Conduct
- Lesson #6 - Knowledge Breeds Compassion: Research Project

Lesson Plan Link:

http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/ed_autisminc.pdf

Parting thoughts from people who live with and support Autism in America



https://rethinkingautism.com/Autistics_Speak_Video.html

“Autists are the ultimate square pegs, and the problem with pounding a square peg into a round hole is not that the hammering is hard work. It's that you're destroying the peg.”

— [Paul Collins](#)

- English Professor, Portland State University
- Father of a child with autism