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Autism World

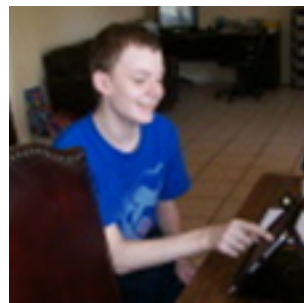
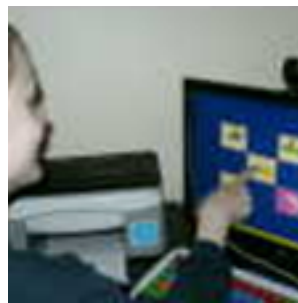
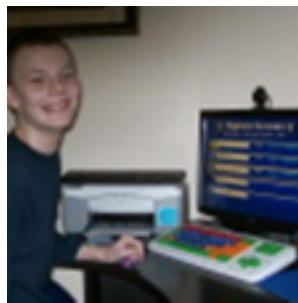
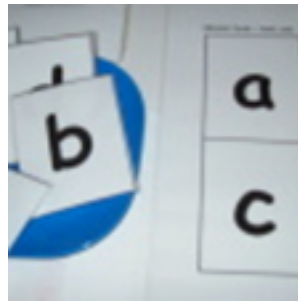
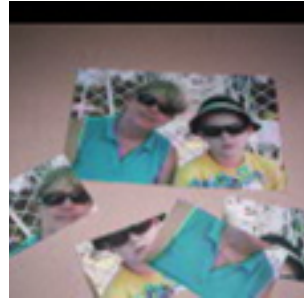
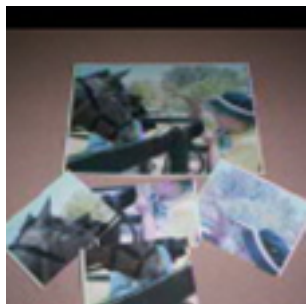
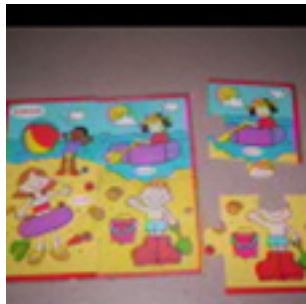
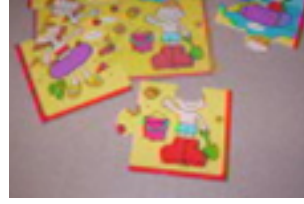
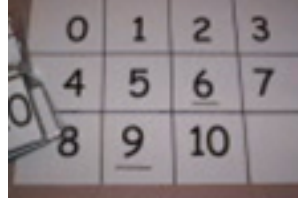
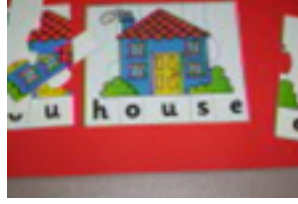
Magazine

*Need a
haircut ?*

Learning How to Learn

Hands-on learning activities for home education

by Jacqui Little



Our son William is non-verbal with ASD and Dyspraxia. Six years ago he (aged 10 at the time) was in a most severe class at a special school. I was told by his teachers that William needed to do sensory activities and he may never know his ABCs. Due to his emotional problems with the school and his lack of learning, it was time to take him out of the school system altogether and home educate.

In July 2007 I started home educating and with the help and guidance from a very good Occupational Therapist; Speech Pathologist and Education Consultant. Through sharing information with these professionals I have learned so much and the professional have learnt from me too.



All about me



I began by teaching my son matching skills with the theme 'All about me.' I made puzzles and matching activities using photographs of him, things he enjoys, friends and family. Matching is the early stage of reading. Once he was interested in learning for a few minutes now and then across the day I added other learning activities.

I gave him lots of praise, which made him happy to learn more. A positive learning experience involves praise for correctly attempting a task. Restating the correct answer in the event of an error occurring avoids negative reactions. e.g. "Point to the colour yellow." If the child points to blue, you say, "That is the colour blue; this one is yellow." We sorted coloured objects into their correct coloured bowls. Starting with sorting red and yellow and then blue and green and finally all four colours. We did matching colours, shapes, letters, numbers. I also taught him the sounds that letter make for early stages of reading. Next we had to teach our son how to point using sensory activities. It took him three months to learn how to isolate his pointer finger. We then moved on to the concept of numbers and their place value from Numbers 1 to 3 and then up to 10.





I taught him by using the *Teacch* method which is working from left to right or top to bottom and having a clear learning environment. Each task must have a clear beginning and ending.

Before teaching any fine motor activity, I was told by our OT to do some gross motor, fun activities first. This helps the body to be in a relaxed state ready for learning.

At the beginning I used a plain plastic table mat on the kitchen work surface as his teaching area as this provided him with clear structure. This gives your child a small area to focus on. As time goes by he will know what is expected from him and it wasn't too bad the last time. William used to like running up and down the family area and preferred to stand, so a quick visit to the table mat to learn with his mum kept his anxieties levels down. Slowly his learning time increased and William began to enjoy learning. It took a very long time to get him to sit at a table; don't rush it, you will know when to try. William now likes to sit or stand and he has two learning areas he feels relaxed in.

We were told, by our Education Consultant, that these children are peripheral learners of anything you would like to teach. Just place it on a wall where your child hangs out. Ensure your child isn't around while you put up your learning resources as some children don't like to see changes in their environment.

Next I decided to teach him the days of the week and months of the year using matching skills, plus some simple activities about time. We found teaching our son the concept of time reduced his anxieties. We also taught him the concepts of before and after; first, next, and last; now and then. As William really enjoyed working with numbers we used numbers to teach before and after concepts. Example; What number comes before 5? 1 2 3 _ _ 5. What number is after 7? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 _ _ 9 10. Giving them a visual display really helps.

Once you child has learnt matching skills, teach discrimination of all the skills you have taught them through matching. This is a good test to know how much information has gone in. Start with discriminating using two items, then three and build on that. Example: put a square, circle and a triangle on the learning mat and say, "Can you show me the circle?" Then show them what is expected of them by you doing hand over hand with them while pointing to the circle.

I had to do this over and over until my son had learnt how to motor plan for that task. Your child may know the answer but doesn't know how to motor plan their body. It is really good to check their eye point. Sometimes you will see them looking at the answer but pointing to wrong answer. It is just a motor planning problem. It will improve.

Teaching approaches used to help William:

Minimising stimuli and noise in the classroom or in any other learning area.

Use a gentle happy voice. Get his attention first.

Be clear. Tell him what to look at; "Look at the book" William benefits most from the information provided by gesture with clear consistent language. Try to use this to help direct eye gaze.

William does use central vision for tasks he understands and for games he enjoys. He uses peripheral vision for scanning and for initial inspection, before honing his attention and looking in the central visual field.

William needs increased processing time to take in information – he cannot be rushed. Plan and then execute a response. Stopping and providing this time is important to develop independence skills.

Continue to provide lots of touchy-feely experiences as a part of the program – to give a better understanding of his tactile sense. Provide consistent words such as sticky, rough, slimy and smooth and add colours too. This will help build up a vocabulary of colours and textures.

Table Top Activities

William found this a very stressful time. It's the unknown. By showing him the task first (or by using other children to mirror the task first) he sees what's going to happen next.

To develop fine motor skills, direct teaching and hand-over-hand modelling with explicit and consistent instruction. These are the precursor skills to early writing.

William's level of education to date at age 16

William can now read, type with one finger, he is age appropriate in Mathematics, enjoying sciences and speech is well on its way.

I would like to give my final words to Temple Grandin. Taken from her book *"The Way I See It!"*

"These individuals are highly aware of their surroundings and have self-learned far more than parents and teachers imagine. It's their bodies that don't work, not their minds."



Please come over and visit me on my Facebook Page Home Schooling for Special Needs - Australia <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Home-Schooling-Special-Needs-Australia/290708884318730>

I have also created a friendly group called, "Resources for Special needs - Australia" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/285820258147322/?ref=ts&fref=ts> Come on over and join. Daily postings of the latest apps, websites and learning resources. We have many printable resources in our files section to help you with your child. There are over a 1000 members including parents and carers, Teachers, Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists and Education Consultants.

Both the group and my home schooling page are universal.

Jacqui



See also:

A good app for teaching the sounds that letters make is SmallTalk Phonemes <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smalltalk-phonemes/id384170714?mt=8>

It's free!

**CLICK ON THE PICTURE WHEN YOU ARE ONLINE TO
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