

## 4. Choosing Topics for the Group

### Advance Planning

August/September is a good time to plan topics for the whole school year. Social skills lessons on one topic may last from 1 to 3 weeks depending on the concept (i.e. Greeting Friends – 1 week; Teasing/Bullying – 3 to 4 weeks.) Initially, topics for social skills should be chosen from reviewing student IEPs. Parents and mainstream teachers may bring up other issues that are also important to teach.

**Parent Questionnaire**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name three friends that go to Wyoming Elementary. (They can be same or different grade)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Who would your child like to play with? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who would your child like to sit next to? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who is your child's best friend? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your child's favorite toy or hobby? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your child's favorite color? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What does your child like to talk about? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What rewards your child? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What are negative punishments to avoid? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How does your child deal with:

- Anger \_\_\_\_\_
- Frustration \_\_\_\_\_
- Stress \_\_\_\_\_

8. Have you introduced your child to his/her diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome/Autism/PDD/NOS? (circle one) YES NO

- Would you mind if I taught lessons to your child explaining self-awareness and life lessons on his/her diagnosis? (circle one) NO YES

9. What issues would you be interested in receiving more information?

- ( ) Sibling issues
- ( ) Parenting
- ( ) Dietary interventions
- ( ) Behavioral issues
- ( ) Sensory issues
- ( ) Other \_\_\_\_\_

The illustration at left is an example of a questionnaire that can be used to gather information from parents. This questionnaire is also included in the Appendix.

### Exploiting "Teachable Moments"

During the year, situations may arise that need direct teaching immediately (i.e. taking a dare to kiss a girl on the bus on Valentine's Day). Ongoing communication with both mainstream teachers and parents will help the facilitator in lesson planning such that "teachable moments" may be taken advantage of for their ability to

help students learn social skills lessons in the context of real life challenges, dilemmas and/or ambitions.

### Age Level Considerations

The age level of group members may somewhat influence the choice of topics for group lessons. For younger students (grades 1 to 3), we usually start the year by teaching or reviewing friendship skills. With older students (grades 4 to 6), greater focus is placed on organizational skills (how to use a planner, writing down assignments, homework issues, etc.)

## Organizing IEP Objectives

One of the techniques we've used to help organize which skills to teach in our groups is to make a master list of the students' objectives on their IEPs. For a group with three students we typed all of the objectives on the IEP as bulleted statements under the student's name. For example:

Blake

- Ask for help when unsure of directions
- Identify and interpret voice tone and sarcasm
- Initiate conversation

Brandi

- Initiate conversation
- Increase tolerance for changes in routine or rules
- Personal space

Brett

- Improve idiom comprehension
- Initiate conversation
- Personal space

We also listed adaptations like Social Stories or Comic Strip Conversations. Then we could look for skills that all students needed to work on and we would focus on those skills first during group.