



**Making Playground Duty Delightful:
*Increasing Engagement And Learning
For Students With Autism By Applying
The Autism Queensland School
Pedagogy To The Playground Learning
Environment.***

Brisbane, Australia

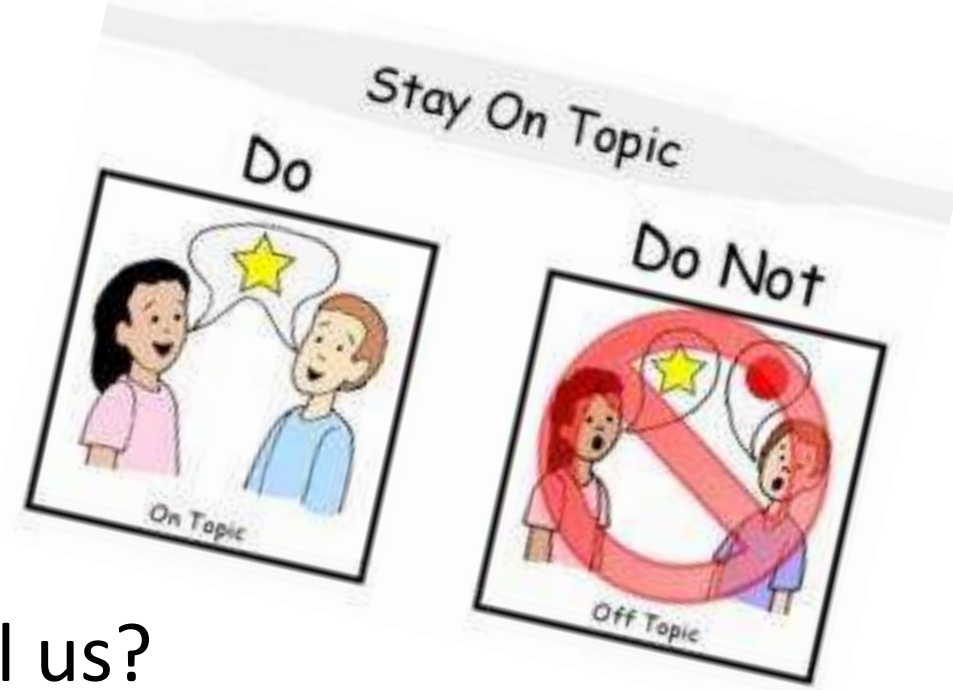
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The Presentation will include:

Lot's of stories.....

1. The AQ school Pedagogy (about us)
2. What does the research (or lack of) tell us?
3. AQ playground supports and programs – what we do, what works
4. The ideal playground learning environment
- our dream playground 😊



1. Our School



- Full time (Early Primary) + part time classes
- Prep to Senior Schooling
- Additional diagnoses: anxiety disorders, learning difficulties, auditory processing disorders, attention deficit / hyperactivity disorders and language disorders.
- Curriculum decision making is supported by interdisciplinary team: teachers, teacher aides, therapists and Teaching & Learning Coordinator - in collaboration with parents / carers and other stakeholders.
- All students have a Personalised Learning Plan.
- Our school pedagogy outlines how we teach at AQ.

1. Our School Pedagogy:



- Apply the principles of structured teaching
- Incorporate interdisciplinary team support
- Evidence informed practices
- A strengths-based approach
- Adjustments to the learning environment address learning styles
- Support for the generalisation of skills

2. Current Research- what does it tell us?

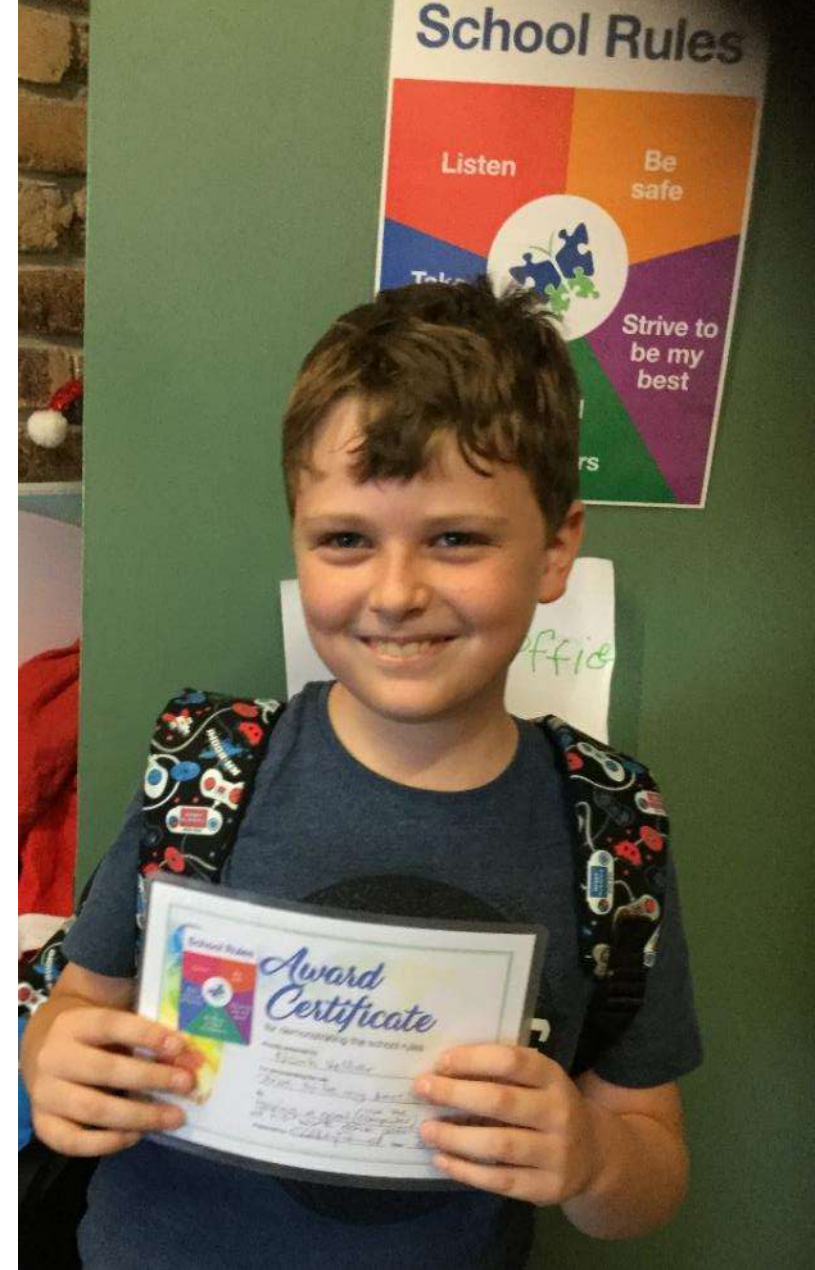
- Very little (*none*) research regarding managing and adjusting the playground to support student engagement and learning
- Limited research regarding effective playground environments for students with autism
- Emerging research into the benefits of physical exercise as a cost effective UDL strategy for supporting student regulation and engagement
- Research regarding managing and adjusting the learning environment highlights evidence informed practises such as those within Autism Qld School pedagogy

2. Managing the Learning Environment:

- ✓ Supports students with autism to attend, access and engage with the curriculum and their peers, develop independence and cope with change.
- ✓ Includes the physical environment, the sensory environment and the social and communicative environment.
- ✓ Recognises that while time in the playground can be a 'break' for many students, some students with autism may find the unstructured, busy and social nature of the playground adds additional demands.
- ✓ Considering the social, physical, sensory and emotional regulation expectations of the playground for students with autism can support the development of more inclusive and engaging play experiences for all.

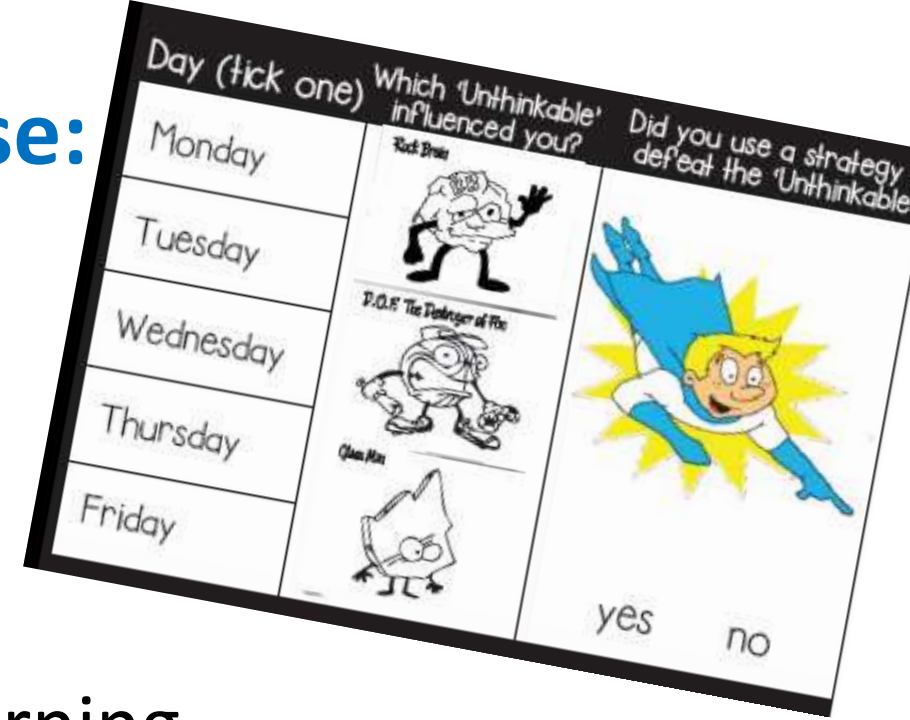
2. Our School's Evidence Informed Practise:

- ✓ Structure
- ✓ Visual strengths
- ✓ Explicitly teach
- ✓ Manage the social demands
(repetition, small groupings, use strengths)
- ✓ Address movement and regulation needs



2. Our School's Evidence Informed Practise:

- ✓ Address the function of behaviour
- ✓ Universal supports
- ✓ Evidence informed programs e.g. Social Thinking© Curriculum
- ✓ PLPs address the impact of autism on learning and engagement
- ✓ Reflective practise within the interdisciplinary team.



3. Applying Autism Qld School Pedagogy:

Apply the principles of structured teaching:

- visual structure;
- visually clear routes (linear);
- Clearly defined areas organised into spaces that allow for active and adventurous play, quiet more solitary play, and areas that support playful peer interaction.

Choice	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning tea	I will	I will	I will	I will	I will
Lunch time inside I will be in room number 3. Will I play with a friend? Yes No	I will	I will	I will	I will	I will
Lunch time outside	I will	I will	I will	I will	I will

Inside I can:

- ✓ iPad
- ✓ Draw
- ✓ Uno

- ✓ Lego
- ✓ Take photos and look at photos

- ✓ What else- check with a teacher.



3. Applying Autism Qld School Pedagogy:

Evidence informed practices incorporating research and current practice:

- identify equipment that supports adventurous play, risk taking and problem solving;
- is structured and defined visually;
- has spaces that may be utilised for explicit teaching as well as quiet and calming activities.



3. Applying Autism Qld School Pedagogy:

Interdisciplinary team support:

- Special educators, senior teachers, teacher aides, bus team, therapy team;
- Explicit skill building supported by therapy team;
- Weekly consultation and collaboration;
- Documented personalised planning (individual snapshots, class alerts, PBS plans, escalation plans, risk management plans)
- Reflection



- Targeted groups to develop individual skills
- “Play Spaces” led by teacher aides; supported by school therapy team.



Play Spaces Teacher Aide feedback

What Worked?



- The small groups worked to have students in different spaces
- Students were learning to wait for their turn
- Students were learning from adult modelling of the activities
- Location of activities were good, students could see what is happening
- Activities were of high interest to students
- It allowed for structured play opportunities for student who don't always play
- The easy to set up activities worked best
- Students were observed working together
- There were less incidents in the playground
- Students were asking when the play space was happening

3. Applying Autism Qld School Pedagogy:

Strengths-based approach:

- visual processing;
- concrete / real life tasks;
- tasks that support practical learning such as making, building, and utilising equipment.



Strengths-based approach:



3. Applying Autism Qld School Pedagogy:

Adjustments to the learning environment address learning styles

- peer relationships can be developed by explicit teaching;
- opportunities for students to view peer models;
- navigation through the playground is orderly and predictable, visual and linear;
- sensory distractions such as noise and busy movements are minimised;
- movement and regulation breaks can be taken within the playground.



Where

A teacher will call everyone to the ROCK!

I can run anywhere in the playground

BUT

My feet must be on the grass, concrete or the bark.

I can not run on the fort, slide, or blue play equipment. Young students are playing on the playground, when I play tag I might crash into them.



How do I play?

The teacher and my friends will decide who goes first.

Eeny meeny miny moe
volunteers



Blue Shoe



Someone



- One person is 'it'
- They tag someone
- Tag backs ok!
- Pick different friends to tag.
- No pausing, go to a teacher for a break
- A teacher can take your tag.



Teacher jobs

- To start the game
- To be 'it' when a kid needs help
- START AT 11:00, finish at 11:10 or earlier
- Support students to access drinks



STAFF NOTES

Game starts at 11:00 Finished strictly at 11:10 or earlier.

MOVE A, H, B, L to SB4 room. All other students to SB1 room or leave outside.

Ensure at least 2 staff members are available to help (when there is 7+ students wanting to play).

Call students to start. Start at the rock

Remind students of

- Where to run (NOT ON PLAYGROUND- redirect student off this for Prep student safety)
- 'yes tag backs'
- Teacher will take your tag if you need a break
- Going to teacher for a break or upset/injured
- No pause rule- encourage students to accept the tag and pass it quickly to adult or volunteering peer.
- STOP game at 11:10



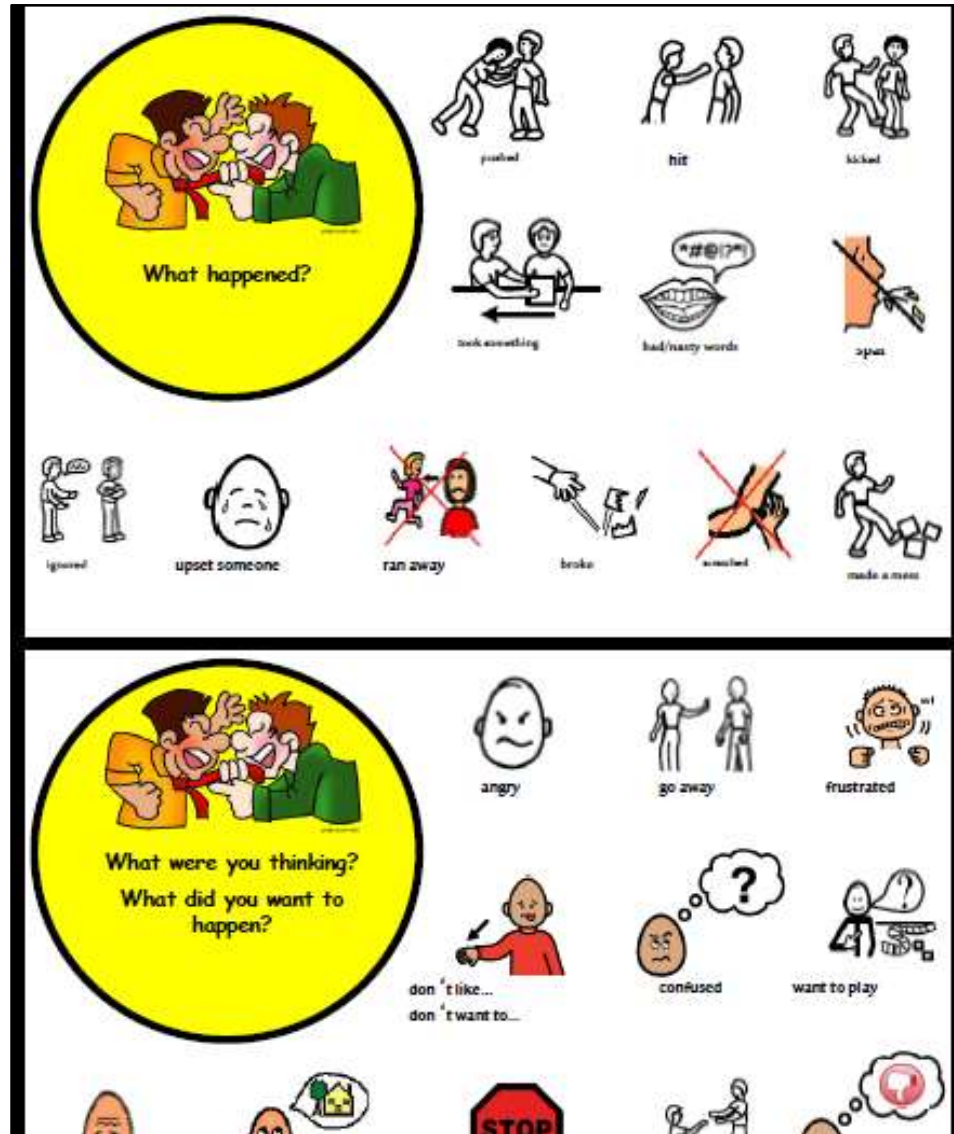
3. Applying Autism Qld School Pedagogy:



Generalisation of skills

- explicit teaching spaces;
- targeted groups to develop skills to be supported within the playground;
- transitions are supported and visually clear;
- there are areas that allow for the display of visual supports.

<i>Lunch Time</i>		
<i>What Can I Do</i>	<i>Where Can I do it</i>	<i>Who can I do it with</i>
		 



4. The Benefits of Changing Our Playground:



- The playground is a context that can foster positive peer learning experiences, the development of cognitive problem solving skills, and an increase in student resilience associated with flexible thinking and the regulation benefits associated with physical exercise, positive engagement with others and success.
- It is also hypothesised that the development of a safe and engaging outdoor learning environment will reduce student and staff incidents relating to student dysregulation and personal injury due to the current environment.



- Classrooms were purpose built in the 1970
- Significant waitlists for both full time and part time (dual enrollment) placements
- Recent refurbishment project -supported by ***Giarola Architects***
- Updating and increaseing classrooms to create an autism-friendly learning environment.



4. Autism Specific Playground:

Impact of autism:

Students benefit from structure and an environment that 'tells them what to do'

Design Strategies / Recommendations:

- Play is in a series of pods or areas
- Equipment is clear, clutter is avoided (storage / ability to close areas)
- Plants / landscaping used to section off areas without obstructing supervision
- Pathways connect and lead to / from main areas (classrooms, entrance, toilets, drinks, equipment).



4. Autism Specific Playground:

Impact of autism:

Options to climb; climb and observe;
physically challenging equipment.

Design Strategies / Recommendations:

- Object orientated play – climb to get somewhere / access something / watch someone
- Challenging equipment – high, requires physical effort,
- problem solving.



4. Autism Specific Playground:

Impact of autism:

Benefit from explicit instruction;
Visually clear spaces;
Access to peer models.

Design Strategies / Recommendations:

- Entrance allows areas to supervise and 'watch' first before joining
- Linear placement of equipment /areas
- Visually clear definitions
- Display options for visual supports including timers, waiting areas, rules.....



4. Autism Specific Playground:

Impact of autism:

Sensory processing strengths and preferences are addressed.



Design Strategies / Recommendations:

Swings, roundabouts

Noise absorption, quiet areas

Sand, digging, water

Tunnels and cubby houses

Consider planting to support touch and smell.



4. Autism Specific Playground:

Impact of autism:

Benefit from explicit teaching of play skills, social thinking skills and opportunities for practise within structured games and activities.

Design Strategies / Recommendations:

- Easy display of visual supports
- Observation points (peer models)
- Activities that encourage interaction such as a basketball hoop, paired games or activities, themed props
- Convenient storage for equipment such as play props, sand toys, construction toys, sports equipment



- ✓ Climbing
- ✓ Places to hide / break areas
- ✓ Pathway for 'chase'
- ✓ Swings
- ✓ More than 1 entrance / exit
- ✓ Viewing area

- ❑ Visually define pathway, direction, activity area (paint, plants, paths)
- ❑ Timer, visual supports
- ❑ Waiting area / seats / table
- ❑ Props for lower cubby
- ❑ Poured soft fall + sand pit
- ❑ Fencing 😊



Long term benefits anticipated from maximising student engagement with the outdoor learning environment include:

- Development of resilience, positive relationships, and participation in peer play, movement and physical activity
- Development of healthy routines in young people with a high risk of significant ongoing mental health challenges
- Reduced need for restrictive and costly mental health interventions
- Increased student, staff and community safety due to increased regulation of student emotions.
- Increased staff capacity to plan and engage students with complex learning needs in physical and peer activities.
- A sustainable learning environment and resources that support relationships, resilience, movement and participation for students at risk.

What we notice:

- During 2018, 86.5% of students improved their ability to transition between environments within AQ school
- Managing student dynamics and the social demands of break times reduces peer conflict
- Explicit teaching of skills such as how to play playground games increases participation and eventually success
- Familiar support staff and a high staff-student ratio is important
- During 2018, 49.6% of part time students in the AQ School playground did not require an individual playground plan; only 19.% of these students were accessing their home school playground at morning tea and lunch
- Teacher aides reported great success from supported play spaces (reduced incidents, increased interactions between peers and staff, happy to continue).

References

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