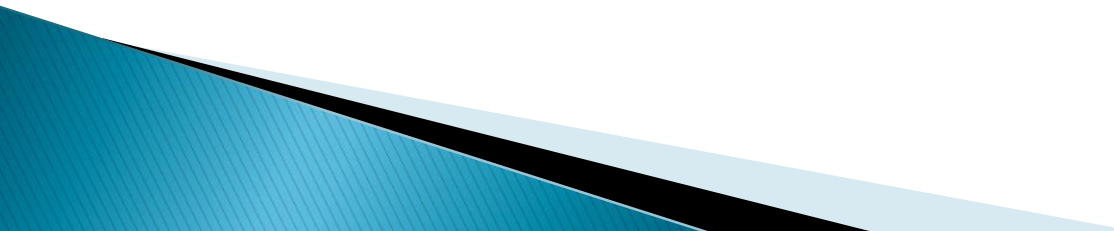


# Transitioning Primary School Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder from a Special Education Setting to a Mainstream Classroom: Successes and Difficulties

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# Transition

- ▶ Transition from a special education classroom to a mainstream school classroom is a complex, socially and culturally mediated process that involves:
  - students,
  - their families,
  - special education teachers,
  - mainstream classroom teachers,
  - school learning support officers (SLSOs)
  - and school executives.

- ▶ Facilitating successful inclusion is a challenge for education systems worldwide (Strnadova and Cumming 2015 ).
  - ▶ Inclusive policies and initiatives have been developed in Australia and internationally but research suggests that placing students with ASD in mainstream school settings does not guarantee inclusion (Lynch and Irvine 2009;
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# Background

- ▶ Autism is a lifelong developmental disability characterised by marked differences in:
  - social interaction,
  - impaired communication,
  - restricted and repetitive interests and behaviours,
  - and sensory sensitivities (Aspect 2018: APA 2013).

Motor  
Difficulties



Communication  
Difficulties



Autism  
Spectrum  
Disorder

Repetitive  
Behavior



Sensitivity to  
Change and  
Stimulation



Social  
Impediments



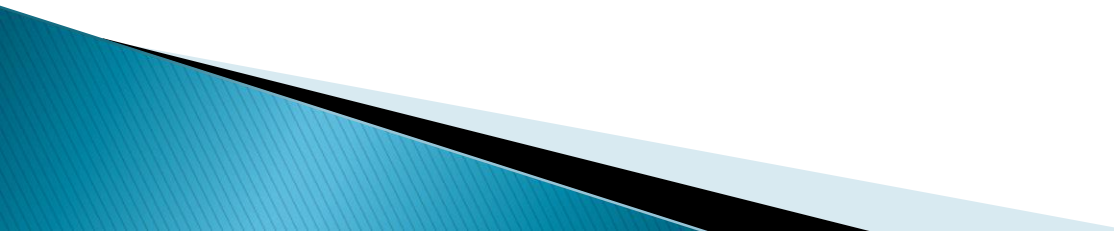
#AutismAwarenessMonth

HHS.gov

# Aspect's Satellite Class Transition Program

- ▶ This program seeks to prepare students with ASD for mainstream education, and to prepare the mainstream educational environment that will receive them.
- ▶ Transition is a key discussion point for every student's annual Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting (Aspect 2012).
- ▶ According to Aspect (2014: 10) 'one in five students' transitioned from Aspect classes to mainstream

# Aims of the Study

- ▶ This study examine the successes and difficulties associated with transition and inclusive education for students with ASD from the perspectives of the individual, the interpersonal context and the institutional context.
  - ▶ It also adds to the limited scholarship on transitioning students from an Aspect satellite classroom to a mainstream classroom
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# Method

- ▶ Research Design
  - Exploratory, multiple case–study research design.
- ▶ Participants
  - Three focus students with ASD, who each transitioned from an Aspect Satellite classroom to a mainstream classroom (each at a different school).
- Data Collection and Analysis
  - Semi– structured interviews of
    - Students
    - Parents
    - Teachers– Receiving Teacher
    - SLSO’s
    - Aspect Teacher – Transition Teacher
  - 5 interviews in every case



# Results

## ▶ *Case Study 1: Kai*

### ▶ *Successes*

- ▶ For both academic and strategic reasons (a smaller, more manageable class), it was decided that repeating year two was advisable.
- ▶ Kai's suitability for transition was evident in his interview as he was able to articulate his dissatisfaction with his relinquishing school 'my old one [school] wasn't very good, they didn't teach us very much stuff'
- ▶ This was echoed by his Aspect teacher, as she explained that at that time Kai had 'reached his potential at Aspect and was a role model for the other students'.
- ▶ In their interviews, Kai, Shelly (mother), Kate (teacher) and Tracey (SLSO) all discussed the positive role of Aspect in preparing Kai and the receiving school for the transition.
- ▶ Kai experienced his preparatory school visits as positive. In his interview, he spoke of enjoying seeing his brothers and playing games with them: 'When I was looking at Year One, I was like I think I see my brother let's play with him'.
- ▶ SLSO Tracey, however, wanted more opportunities to develop a rapport with Kai prior to the transition.

# Results

- ▶ The teacher and the school implemented multiple strategies that were successful in facilitating Kai's successful transition. These included:
  - Kai's placement in a smaller class,
  - Daily monitoring of seating arrangements to ensure Kai was in a seat that helped him engage in the classroom.
  - The teacher conducted weekly social skills training with Kai and all class members, and placed Kai in a small group for groupwork most days.
  - During their interviews, both receiving teacher and Aspect teacher stressed the importance of class structure, routines and expectations in aiding Kai.

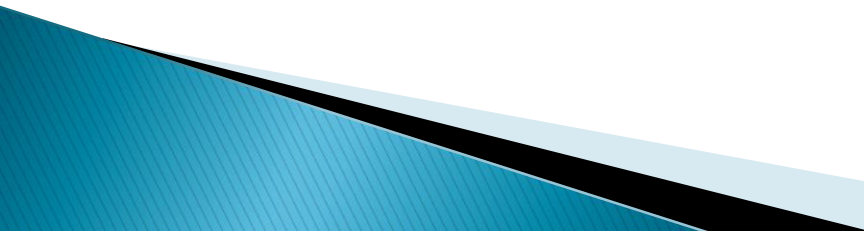
# Results .....

## ▶ *Difficulties:*

- Teacher thought that she didn't receive enough information about his behaviour and that some strategies were not helpful
- SLSO was not included in the process
- Playground has been an ongoing problem
  - *Kai has been withdrawn from the playground to the library for lunchtime after strategy of SLSO support in the playground was not successful.*

# Case study 2: Dean

- ▶ Overall Dean has transitioned well experiencing a great deal of success, but also some difficulties. In her interview,
  - Dean's mum Cathy described it as 'a really successful transition'.
- ▶ Successful strategies included:
  - Aspect support– pre and post transition
    - All About School– visual book
    - Six sense program– for whole class conducted by Aspect Teacher

- ▶ One on one support
  - ▶ Breaking down instructions
  - ▶ Very structured classroom
  - ▶ Needed cont'd support in
    - comprehension
    - mathematics
    - Writing
  - ▶ Difficulties
    - Playground – doesn't know how to join in games even with SLSO support
    - Missed friends from previous school.
- 

# Discussion

- ▶ Three elements were essential for successful transition:
  - 1) Timely intervention ( window of opportunity) and student's willingness to access regular curriculum
  - 2) Aspect's support pre and post intervention
    - School visits
    - Social stories
    - Visual timetables
    - Photos
    - Individualised strategies

# Discussion .....

- ▶ 3) Appropriate Classroom strategies
  - Clear expectations
  - Structured and calm classroom
  - Visual supports
  - Lesson Breaks
  - Individualised strategies based on knowledge of students
  - Social skill strategies
  - Smaller class sizes

# Discussion .....

- ▶ Difficulties
- ▶ 1) Social difficulties in the playground for all three students
  - Strategies implemented included
    - Organised lunch time clubs
    - SLSO support
    - Alternatives– Library
- ▶ 2) Friendships– All students missed friends
- ▶ 3) On–going professional development needed for classroom teachers and SLSO's



# Limitations

- ▶ Only 3 students
- ▶ All considered to be high functioning academically.
- ▶ *Would Aspect Transition model be successful with other students with ASD?*
- ▶ *Whole paper available* : Martin, T., Dixon, R., Verenkina, I. & Costley, D., (2019). Transitioning Primary School Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder from a Special Education Setting to a Mainstream Classroom: Successes and Difficulties. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/CU5MtPDVICgcTaWd4KSw/full?target=10.1080/13603116.2019.1568597>
- ▶ Latest publication free eprints available.
- ▶

# References

