

Introduction to Autism:
Common Characteristics
&
Behavioral and Instructional Interventions

Santa Barbara County
SELPA Office



Welcome Lompoc Unified School District

 Today's presenter: Jestin St. Peter

 SELPA Autism / Behavior Specialist

 Credentialed School Psychologist

 Today's participants: ??

 Gen Edu., SpEd., paraprofessionals, etc.



Key areas to address when supporting students with challenging behavior

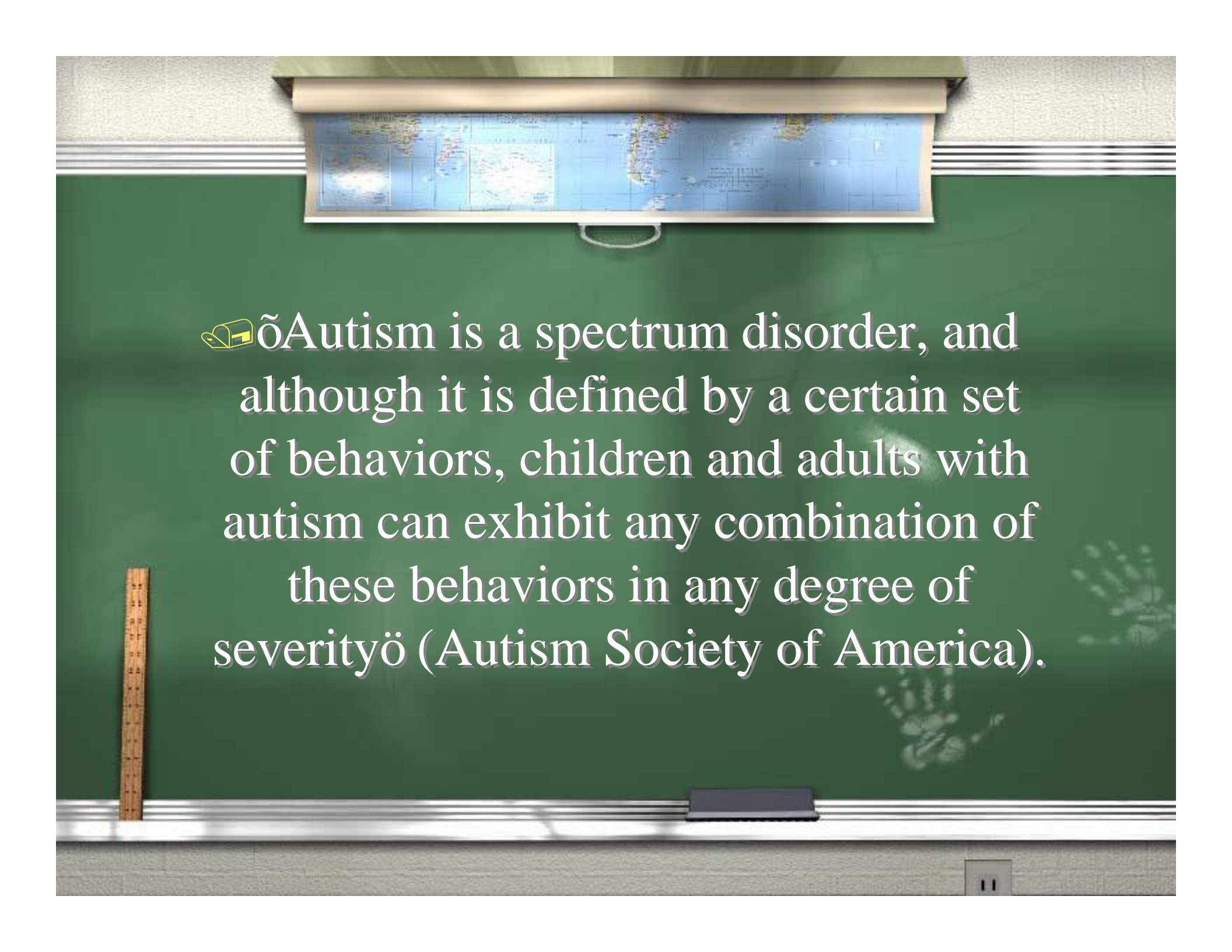
- ✎ Interaction styles
- ✎ Degree of choice making
- ✎ Task = to student skill level
- ✎ Transitions
- ✎ Function of behavior
- ✎ Predictors of behaviors
- ✎ Staff responses to behavior
- ✎ Methods of reinforcement/motivation

- ✎ Precipitating factors
- ✎ Communication among team members
- ✎ Teaching replacement behaviors
- ✎ Reflection / Debriefing
- ✎ Behavior Support Plan development & implementation



Today's Topic Areas

- 📖 1) Pervasive Developmental Disorders and Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- 📖 2) Autism: Three Areas of Impairment
- 📖 3) Instructional Implications



📖 ãAutism is a spectrum disorder, and although it is defined by a certain set of behaviors, children and adults with autism can exhibit any combination of these behaviors in any degree of severityö (Autism Society of America).



Pervasive Developmental Disorders & Autistic Spectrum Disorders

PDD is the term used to describe a group of childhood disorders with similar behavioral features.

-  Autistic Disorder
-  Asperger's Disorder
-  Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified
-  Rett's Disorder
-  Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

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graph TD; A[Pervasive Developmental Disorders] --- B[Autistic Disorder]; A --- C[Asperger's Disorder]; A --- D[PDD-NOS]; A --- E[Rett's Disorder]; A --- F[Childhood Disintegrative Disorder];
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Pervasive
Developmental
Disorders

Autistic
Disorder

Asperger's
Disorder


PDD- NOS


Rett's
Disorder

Childhood
Disintegrative
Disorder



Group Activity 5-10 minutes

 What causes autism?
and

 What are common characteristics of children diagnosed with autism?



Causes and Prevalence

- ✎ Occurs approx. at the same rates in individuals of different socio-economic status, across different countries and ethnic groups
- ✎ Current thinking suggests genetic and hereditary factors play a dominate role in its etiology
- ✎ *Historically estimated to be abt 1 in 2000 children, recent studies show 1 in 160 children*
- ✎ Autism is one of several pervasive developmental disorders (PDD), also referred to as autistic spectrum disorders (ASD)



Autism ...

- 📖 is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder
- 📖 typically appears within the first three years of life
- 📖 is a spectrum disorder, affects the three areas differently in each individual
- 📖 4 to 5 times more prevalent in boys than girls



Autism's primary symptoms include:

1. Impairments in social interaction
2. Impairments in verbal and non-verbal communication
3. Presence of repetitive and restricted patterns of behavior or interests



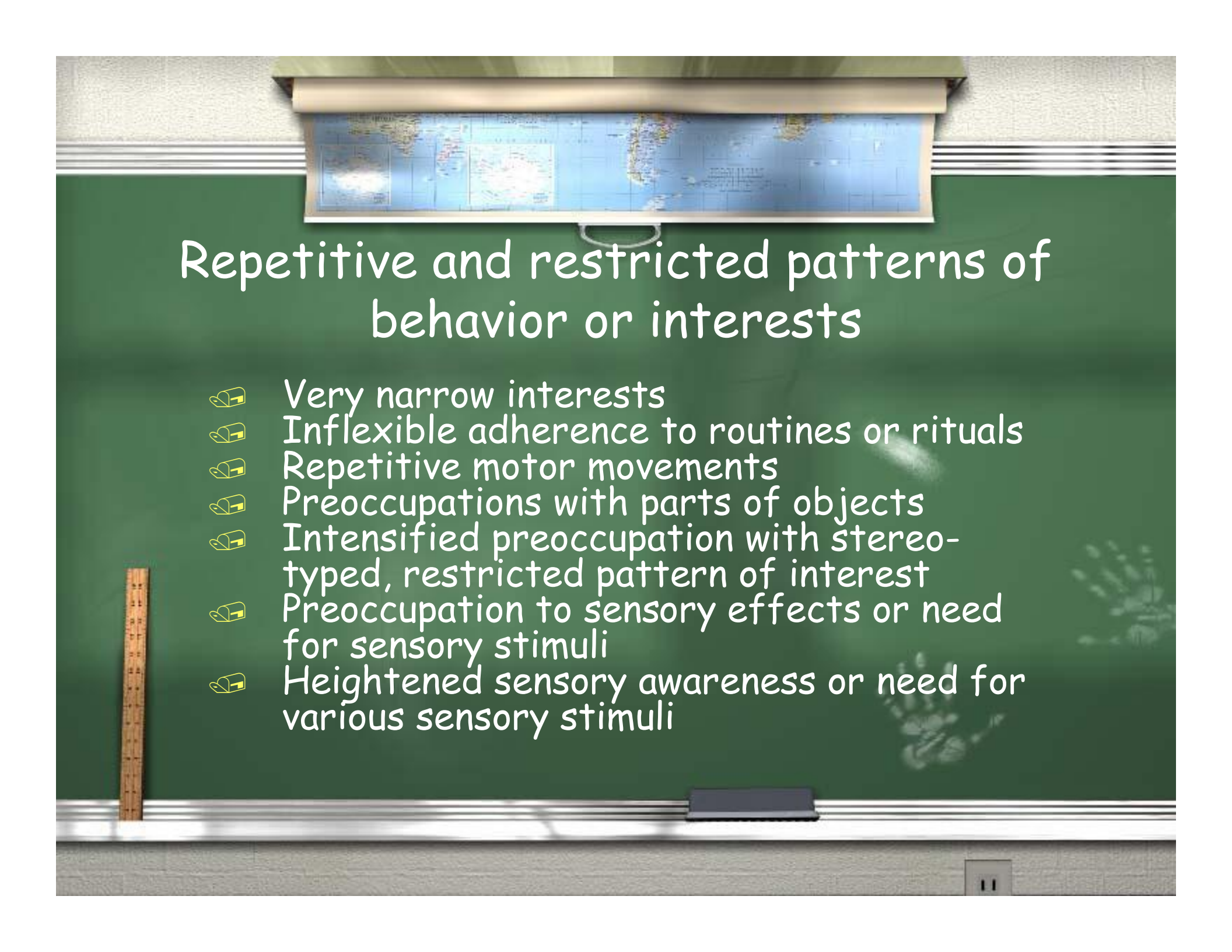
Social Impairments

- ✎ Poor eye contact
- ✎ Poor verbal and nonverbal communication
- ✎ Extreme limitations in spontaneously shared: attention, enjoyment, interests, or achievement of others (social/emotional reciprocity)
- ✎ Impaired ability to perceive and process social and emotional cues, i.e. poor awareness of others emotions
- ✎ Lack insight into the thoughts, feelings, plans, and wishes of others
- ✎ Significant difficulty in predicting other's thoughts and actions
- ✎ Poor peer relations
- ✎ Difficulty following conversation
- ✎ Attention and attending difficulties



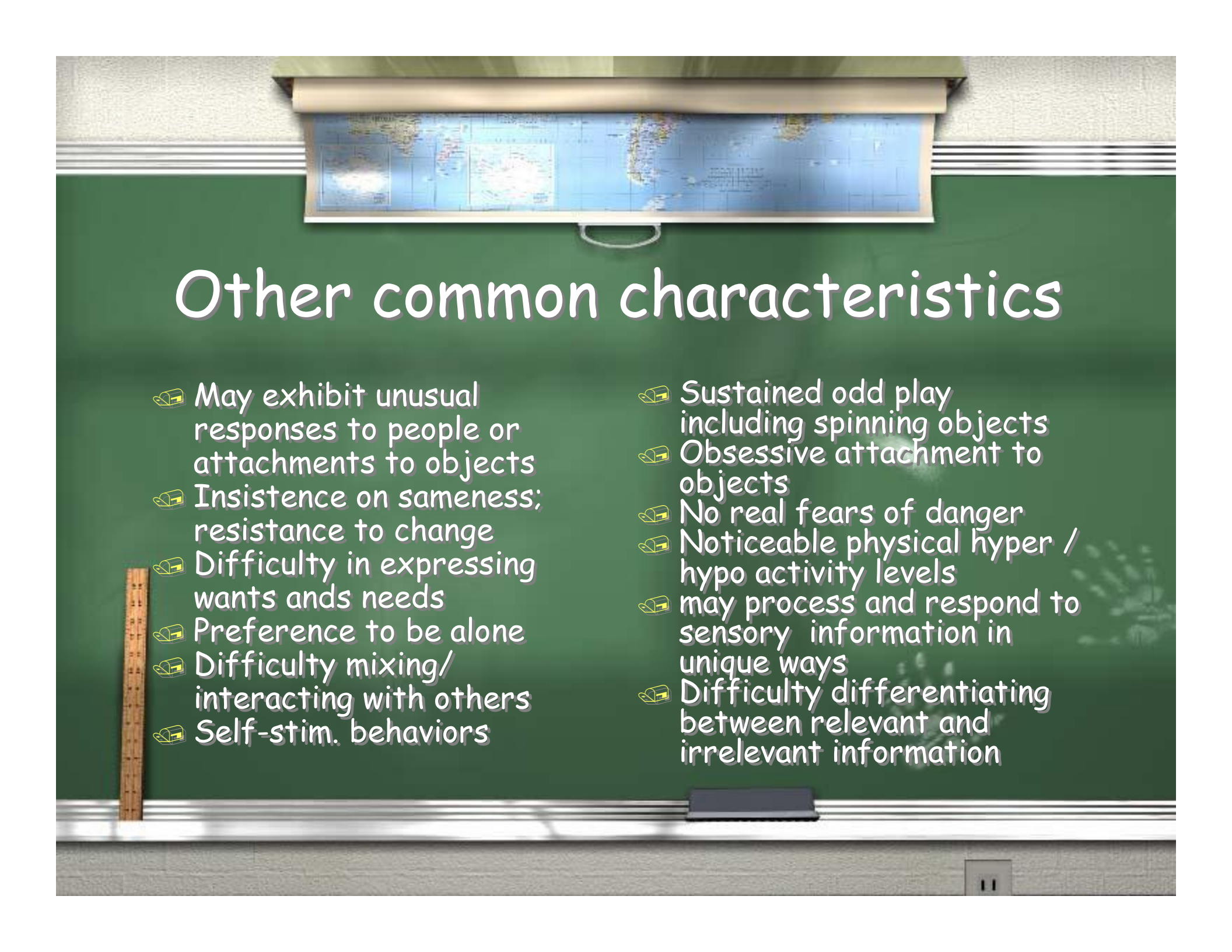
Impairments in Communication & Play

- ✎ Poorly developed language
- ✎ Lack of conversational skill
- ✎ Language that is stereotyped- unusually repetitive- child uses same phrase or sentence over and over, nonfunctional
- ✎ Play that is similarly stereotyped or lacks the quality of make-believe
- ✎ Auditory processing weaknesses



Repetitive and restricted patterns of behavior or interests

- 📁 Very narrow interests
- 📁 Inflexible adherence to routines or rituals
- 📁 Repetitive motor movements
- 📁 Preoccupations with parts of objects
- 📁 Intensified preoccupation with stereotyped, restricted pattern of interest
- 📁 Preoccupation to sensory effects or need for sensory stimuli
- 📁 Heightened sensory awareness or need for various sensory stimuli





Other common characteristics

- ✎ May exhibit unusual responses to people or attachments to objects
- ✎ Insistence on sameness; resistance to change
- ✎ Difficulty in expressing wants and needs
- ✎ Preference to be alone
- ✎ Difficulty mixing/interacting with others
- ✎ Self-stim. behaviors
- ✎ Sustained odd play including spinning objects
- ✎ Obsessive attachment to objects
- ✎ No real fears of danger
- ✎ Noticeable physical hyper / hypo activity levels
- ✎ may process and respond to sensory information in unique ways
- ✎ Difficulty differentiating between relevant and irrelevant information



Group Activity 5-10 minutes

 Come up with a strategy to compensate or further develop an area of weakness

 Ex. "Difficulty interacting with others"
Strategy- 2x a week provide structured play or academic activities with selected peer(s)
Develop and practice using scripts the child can use to initiate interactions with peers




Come up with a strategy to compensate or further develop an area of weakness from the list below:

1. Difficulty expressing wants and needs
2. Heightened sensory awareness or need for sensory stimuli
3. Difficulty in understanding social and emotional cues
4. Insistence on sameness; resistance to change
5. Difficulty interacting with others



Is autism on the rise??

 Why is the diagnosis of autism on the rise ...

1. Changes in diagnostic criteria
 -  revisions include more children or more categories as part of the autistic spectrum Ex. Asperger's
2. Prior Misclassifications- MR, schizoidtypal
3. Heightened public awareness and acceptance
4. Better training in professionals in recognizing the disorder



Is autism on the rise?

5. Impact of early intervention programs-
diagnose and treat earlier rather than
"wait and see" approach
6. An actual increase in the disorder
7. Speculative hypotheses
 - 📖 Geographical clusters, environmental
toxins, vaccines
 - 📖 However, no solid evidence to support
these claims to date

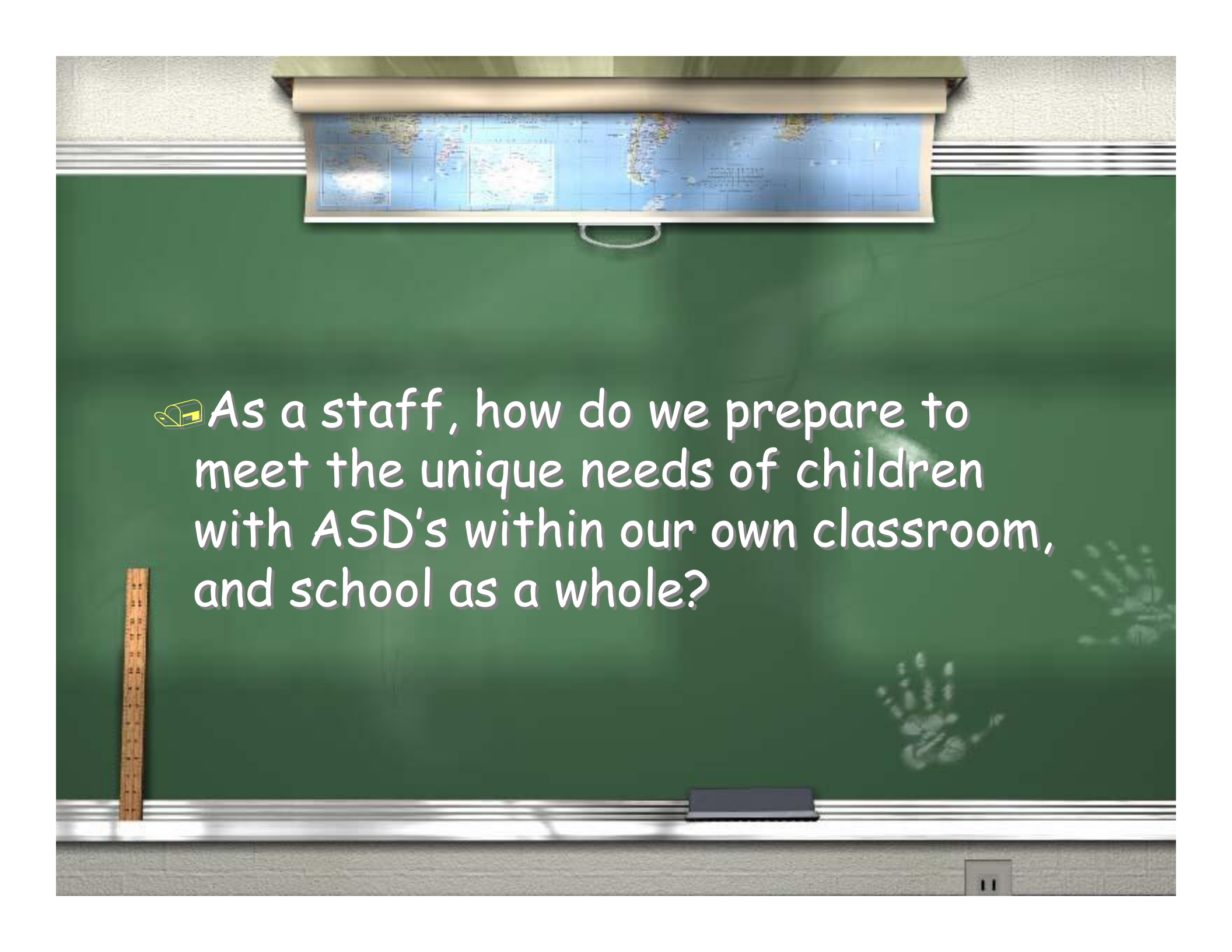


Section 2: Educational & Instructional Implications

- ✎ More children diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorders will be attending schools
- ✎ Federal Law- Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act 2004 mandates that all students with disabilities be provided services within the least restrictive environment

What does this mean for us?

- ✎ More children with ASD's will be provided education within general education programs
- ✎ Responsibility of educating these children should be shared among General Education and Special Education teachers
- ✎ Will require more frequent communication and collaboration among all team members




📖 As a staff, how do we prepare to meet the unique needs of children with ASD's within our own classroom, and school as a whole?



Group Activity 5-10 minutes

- 📖 It is early in the school year and you have just learned that a student with autism will be joining your general education class for the remainder of the school year.
- 📖 What instructional and behavioral strategies will be helpful in successfully including the child into the class?



Instructional Strategies- Use a Structured Teaching Philosophy





- 📁 Communicate and Collaborate
- 📁 Physical Environment
- 📁 Individual Schedule
- 📁 Clear Expectations
- 📁 Reinforcement
- 📁 Communication Style
- 📁 Transitions



First things first ...







Before the child arrives we should make attempts to:

1. Gather information

-  Review the child's educational file
-  Talk to the parent to get an idea of what their child likes and dislikes, what are the child's strengths and weaknesses
-  Talk to the child's previous teacher
-  Attempt to learn what are the predictors for any challenging behaviors



2. Communicate and collaborate- Take a proactive approach

-  Collaborate with the family members as they are the %experts+
-  Collaborate with the special education teacher
-  Determine if assignments will need to be modified and work as a team, use each others expertise
-  Work as a team to put a plan in place, and modify as needed
-  Agree to general responsibilities for gen edu. teacher and sp.ed teacher
-  Share responsibility among team members, schedule time to meet to discuss progress and coordinate plans- academic modifications, behavior interventions, etc.

Anticipate obstacles, work as a team to address possible difficulties

*Be organized and have a plan, define roles and share responsibility
Take an active role in interacting and teaching the child*



Instructional Strategies:

2. Examine Physical Environment:

- ✎ Refers to the way we arrange the furniture and materials to add meaning and context to the area or environment
- ✎ Create a well-organized, predictable environmental space
- ✎ Have clear boundaries and designate areas for specific activities
- ✎ Minimize visual & auditory distractions
- ✎ Reduce the noise level of the classroom to the extent possible (i.e. use area rugs and wall hangings made of sound absorbent materials)
- ✎ If possible avoid using fluorescent lighting
- ✎ Determine appropriate location of seat



3. Student Schedule

- 📅 A visual schedule will reduce anxiety and allows the student to understand and predict what will come next
- 📅 Visual picture schedules help the student understand the timing and sequence of classroom activities
- 📅 Capitalizes on the visual learning strengths of many children with ASD's
- 📅 Provides a forum to address changes in the daily schedule
- 📅 If there is a change in the schedule this should be explained and previewed PRIOR to the event
- 📅 Incorporate choice throughout the day- choice increases interest and motivates everyone



Use an individual student schedule

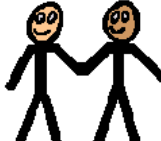


Schedule should tell the student:

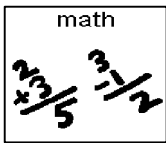
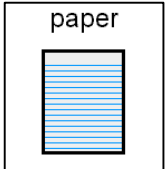


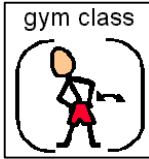
- The sequence of the day's activities
- How/when to transition to each activity
- What activity has been completed
- What activity remains to be done
- When preferred activities will take place

 Schedule should be consistent, predictable and incorporate high degree of choice

Tyler's Daily Schedule

Monday

<u>Things To Do</u>	<u>Completed</u>	<u>I earned my stickers</u>
<p>1. Morning check in</p> <p>friend</p> 		
<p>2. Work on language arts in room 4</p> <p>write</p> 		
<p>3. Recess</p> <p>recess</p> 		

Things to Do	Completed	I earned my stickers
4. Math in Room 3	 <p>math</p> <p>$\frac{2}{3} \times \frac{5}{2}$ $\frac{3}{4} \div \frac{1}{2}$</p>	
5. Class work	 <p>paper</p>	
6. Lunch	 <p>lunch box</p>	
7. Story time	 <p>storyteller</p>	
8. PE	 <p>gym class</p>	



4. Be clear about expectations

Students with disabilities typically want to know these answers...

- 📖 What am I expected to do? (worksheet, reading, writing, etc.)
- 📖 How much am I expected to do?
- 📖 How will I know when I am finished?
- 📖 What will I do next? (sometimes)



Before a task or activity

- 📖 Clearly communicate the expectations
- 📖 Break and present the task in smaller steps
- 📖 Indicate the expected sequence to complete the task
- 📖 Have a clear beginning and end to the activity
- 📖 Be prepared with the specific assignment and materials
- 📖 *Sequence cards that illustrate a series of connected actions can help the child with autism learn new skills



Check off list

 Put my name on the paper X

 Read the instructions X

 Start working on problems X

 Complete all problems X

 Turn paper in to teacher _____

 Return to seat _____



WRITING CHECK LIST


- 1. I circled words that might be misspelled and looked for the correct spelling.

WRITING CHECK LIST

- 1. I circled words that might be misspelled and looked for the correct spelling.
- 2. I started every sentence with a capital and capitalized every proper noun.

WRITING CHECK LIST

- 1. I circled words that might be misspelled and looked for the correct spelling.
- 2. I started every sentence with a capital and capitalized every proper noun.
- 3. I reread everything I wrote.
- 4. I wrote complete sentences.
- 5. I used proper punctuation for every sentence.
- 6. My writing makes sense.



5. Will the child need reinforcement to participate in gen edu. activities

- 📖 First step- determine what motivates the child
- 📖 Develop an inventory and schedule of reinforcement-
- 📖 (If tangible always pair with verbal reinforcement)
- 📖 Gradually fade out reinforcement as student increases independence and success



6. Communication & Instructional style

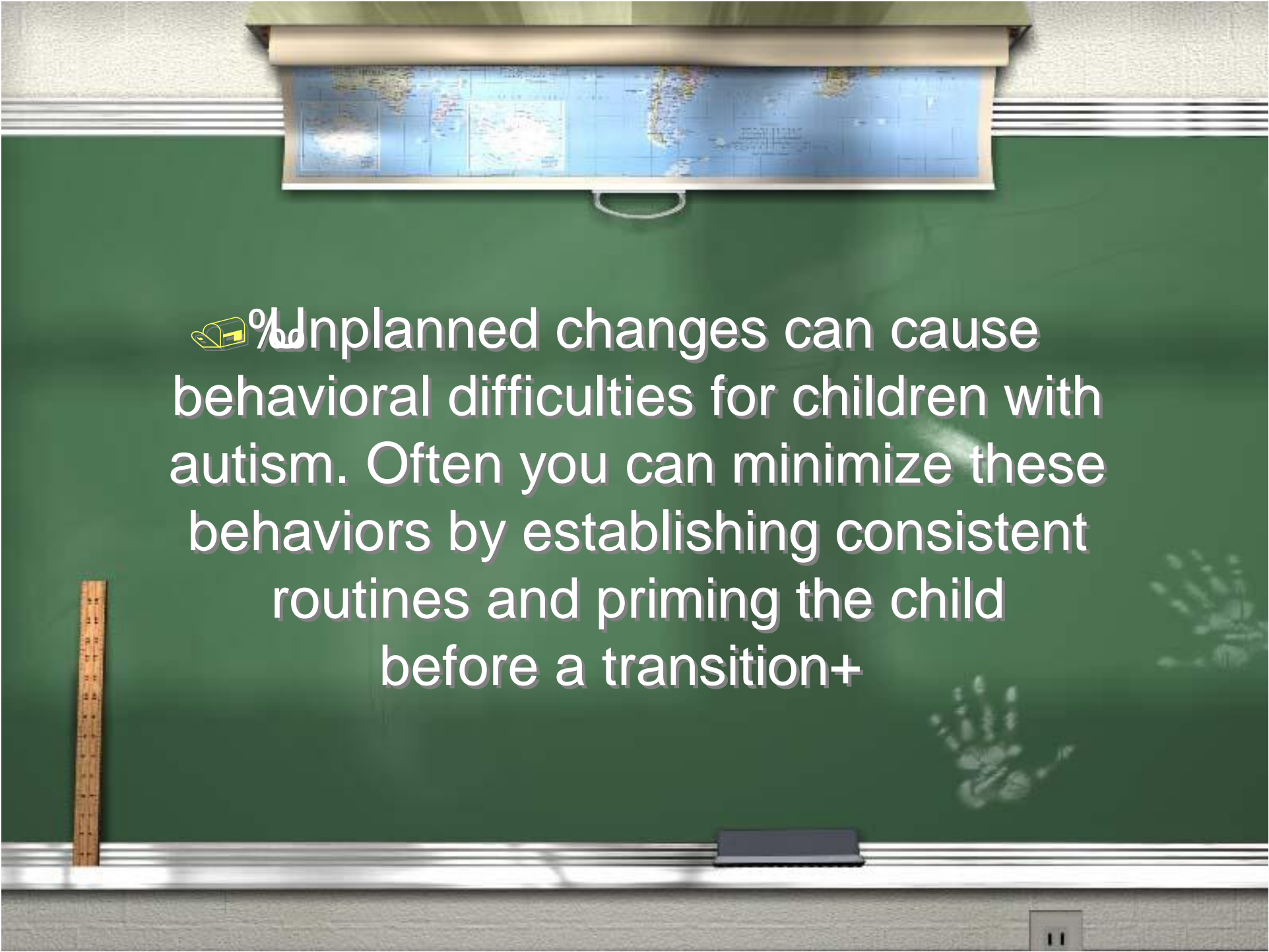
(Many children with autism have auditory processing difficulties)


- 📖 Talk slowly and simply
- 📖 Do not overload the child with long strings of verbal dialogue
- 📖 Use short sentences and be concrete
- 📖 Give one direction at a time, repeat without rephrasing as needed
- 📖 Use visuals supports (paired with words)- provides visual clarity, visual structure, and visual organization

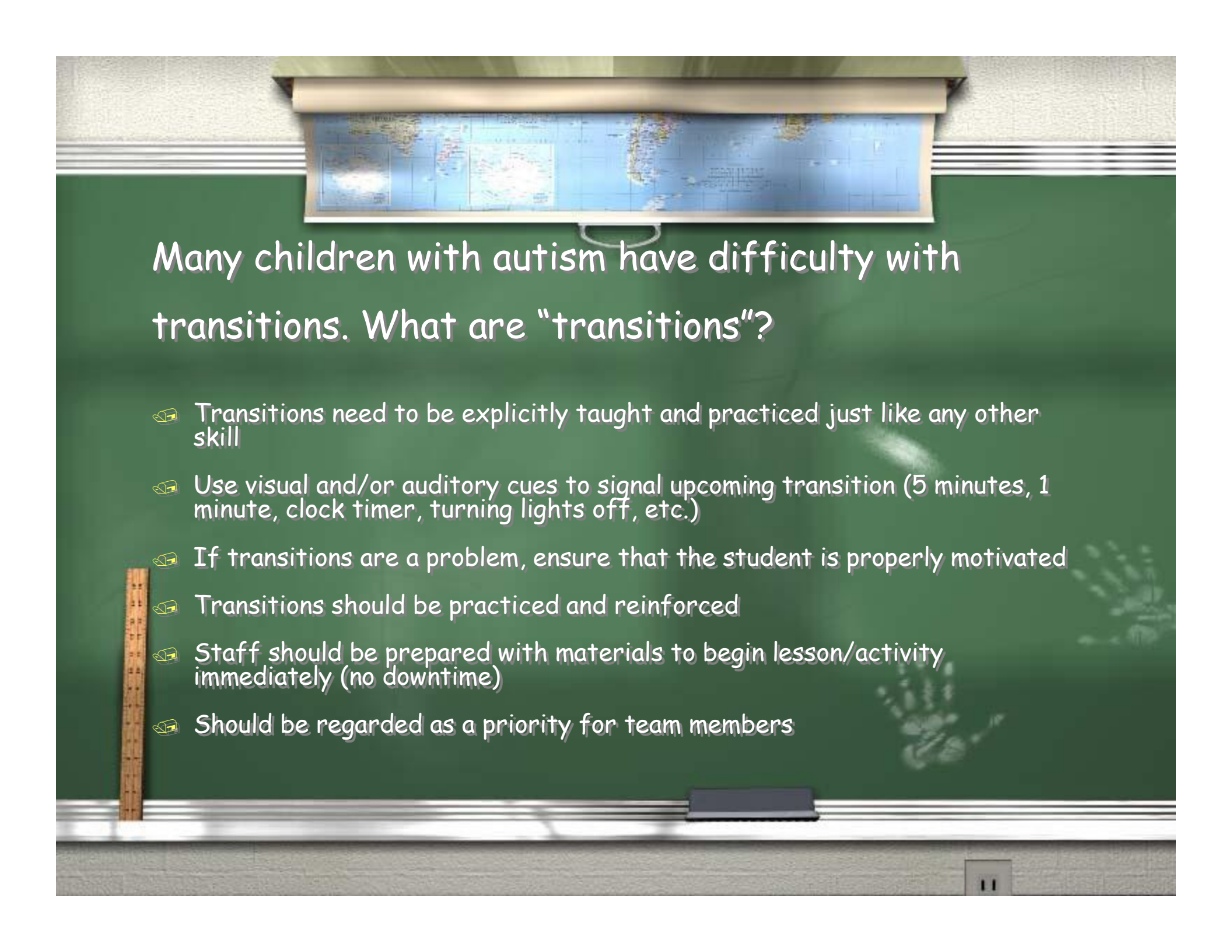


Communication/Instructional Style

- 📅 Use schedules, lists, charts, calendars, and outlines
- 📅 Be sure to have the student's visual attention- visual cues will help the child attend to and process your speech
- 📅 Use positive statements, tell the student what he/she should be doing
- 📅 Use first this then that (if appropriate)
- 📅 Establish routines to increase predictability
- 📅 Teach to the child's strengths and interests
- 📅 Use strengths and interests as a starting point- and build

A photograph of a classroom. At the top, a world map is mounted on the wall. Below it is a large green chalkboard. On the left side of the chalkboard, a wooden ruler is leaning against the wall. The text is written in white on the chalkboard. At the bottom of the chalkboard, there is a small black eraser. The wall below the chalkboard is a light-colored, textured surface with a power outlet visible on the right side.

 Unplanned changes can cause behavioral difficulties for children with autism. Often you can minimize these behaviors by establishing consistent routines and priming the child before a transition+



Many children with autism have difficulty with transitions. What are "transitions"?

- ✎ Transitions need to be explicitly taught and practiced just like any other skill
- ✎ Use visual and/or auditory cues to signal upcoming transition (5 minutes, 1 minute, clock timer, turning lights off, etc.)
- ✎ If transitions are a problem, ensure that the student is properly motivated
- ✎ Transitions should be practiced and reinforced
- ✎ Staff should be prepared with materials to begin lesson/activity immediately (no downtime)
- ✎ Should be regarded as a priority for team members



Transitions

- 📖 Preview upcoming activity before transition
- 📖 establish routines for closing activities i.e. putting materials away, marking off checklist, etc.
- 📖 remind student of upcoming preferred activities/reinforcers (visually where appropriate)
- 📖 before the transition briefly go over schedule and expectation of appropriate behavior
- 📖 anticipate difficult periods of the day and have a plan



The end!

Resources:

"Assessment of Children: Behavioral Social, and Clinical Foundations 5th Ed"., J. Sattler

"Helping Children with Autism Learn", B. Seigel

"Making a Difference: Behavioral Intervention for Autism",
Maurice, Green, Foxx

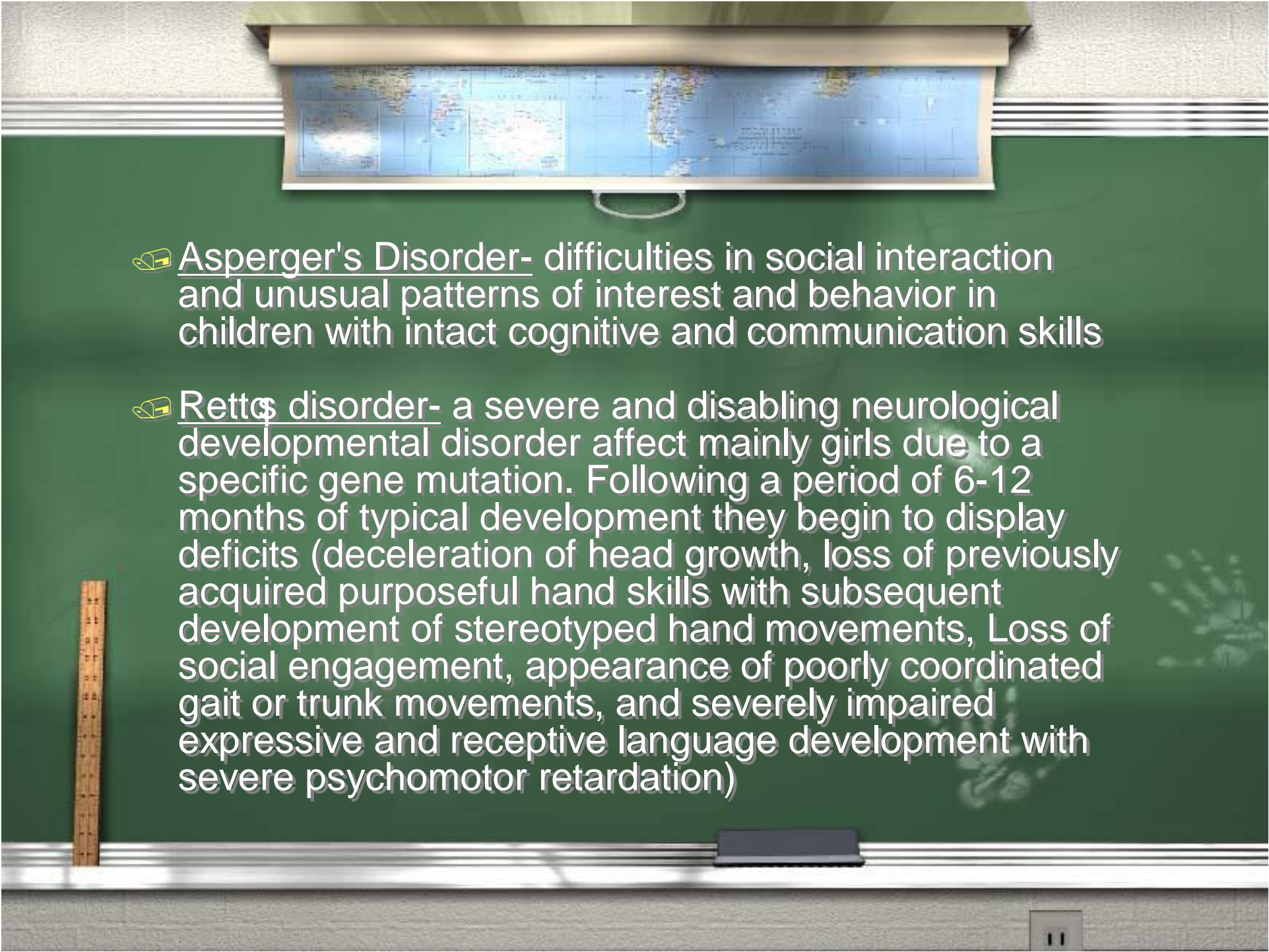
National Center for Autism

www.nationalautismcenter.org

The BSP Desk Reference: Positive Environment Network of Trainers

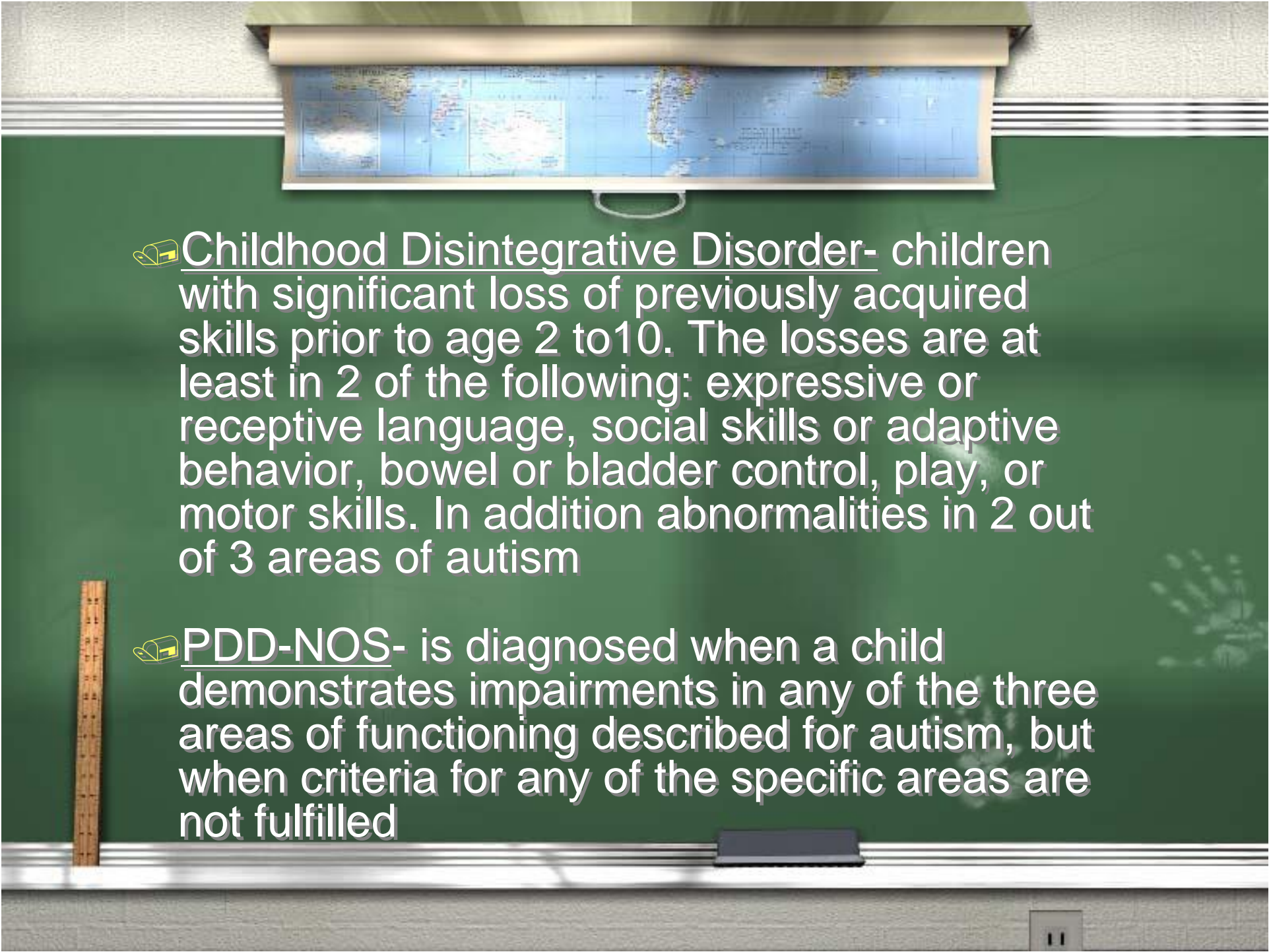
Gwen Redira PPT- Structured Teaching


Kim Weiner PPT- Prevent Through Positive Methods



📖 Asperger's Disorder- difficulties in social interaction and unusual patterns of interest and behavior in children with intact cognitive and communication skills

📖 Retts disorder- a severe and disabling neurological developmental disorder affect mainly girls due to a specific gene mutation. Following a period of 6-12 months of typical development they begin to display deficits (deceleration of head growth, loss of previously acquired purposeful hand skills with subsequent development of stereotyped hand movements, Loss of social engagement, appearance of poorly coordinated gait or trunk movements, and severely impaired expressive and receptive language development with severe psychomotor retardation)



 Childhood Disintegrative Disorder- children with significant loss of previously acquired skills prior to age 2 to 10. The losses are at least in 2 of the following: expressive or receptive language, social skills or adaptive behavior, bowel or bladder control, play, or motor skills. In addition abnormalities in 2 out of 3 areas of autism

 PDD-NOS- is diagnosed when a child demonstrates impairments in any of the three areas of functioning described for autism, but when criteria for any of the specific areas are not fulfilled



Fact or Fiction

- ❏ Cold or distant parenting can cause autism
- ❏ Children with autism can not learn new skills
- ❏ Autism can be outgrown
- ❏ Children with autism never make eye contact
- ❏ Children with autism never speak
- ❏ Children with autism do not smile
- ❏ All Children with autism are mentally retarded
- ❏ All Children with autism are the same
- ❏ Children with autism usually misbehave on purpose or to irritate others
- ❏ Children with autism do not belong in general education classrooms